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Tennyson

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TAUCHNITZ EDITION.

VOL. 2447.

LOCKSLEY HALL; THE PROMISE OF MAY;
TIRESIAS AND OTHER POEMS.

By ALFRED LORD TENNYSON.

IN ONE VOLUME.

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LOCKSLEY HALL

SIXTY YEARS AFTER;

THE PROMISE OF MAY;

TIRESIAS

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

ALFRED LORD TENNYSON.

P. L. D. C. L.

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BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1887.

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CONTENTS.

LOCKSLEY HALL, ETC.

	Page
Locksley Hall sixty Years after	11
The Fleet	40
Opening of the Indian and Colonial Exhibition by the Queen	43

THE PROMISE OF MAY.

The Promise of May	47

TIRESIAS AND OTHER POEMS.

To E. Fitzgerald	151
Tiresias	154
The Wreck	163
Despair	175
The Ancient Sage	185
The Flight	197
Tomorrow	207
The Spinster's Sweet-Arts	216

Page

Balin and Balan 226
Prologue 251
The Charge of the Heavy Brigade at Balaclava . . . 253
Epilogue 257
To Virgil 261
The dead Prophet 264
Early Spring 269
Prefatory Poem to my Brother's Sonnets 272
"Frater Ave atque Vale" 274
Helen's Tower 275
Epitaph on Lord Stratford de Redcliffe 276
Epitaph on General Gordon 277
Epitaph on Caxton 278
To the Duke of Argyll 279
Hands all round 280
Freedom 282
To H. R. H. Princess Beatrice 285
Poets and their Bibliographies 287

LOCKSLEY HALL

SIXTY YEARS AFTER, ETC.

TO MY WIFE

I DEDICATE

THIS DRAMATIC MONOLOGUE

AND

THE POEMS WHICH FOLLOW.

LOCKSLEY HALL

SIXTY YEARS AFTER.

Late, my grandson! half the morning have I paced these sandy tracts,
Watch'd again the hollow ridges roaring into cataracts,

Wander'd back to living boyhood while I heard the curlews call,
I myself so close on death, and death itself in Locksley Hall.

So—your happy suit was blasted—she the faultless, the divine;
And you liken—boyish babble—this boy-love of yours with mine.

I myself have often babbled doubtless of a foolish
past;
Babble, babble; our old England may go down in
babble at last.

"Curse him!" curse your fellow-victim? call him
dotard in your rage?
Eyes that lured a doting boyhood well might fool
a dotard's age.

Jilted for a wealthier! wealthier? yet perhaps she
was not wise;
I remember how you kiss'd the miniature with
those sweet eyes.

In the hall there hangs a painting—Amy's arms
about my neck—
Happy children in a sunbeam sitting on the ribs of
wreck.

In my life there was a picture, she that clasp'd my
neck had flown;
I was left within the shadow sitting on the wreck
alone.

Yours has been a slighter ailment, will you sicken
for her sake?
You, not you! your modern amourist is of easier,
earthlier make.

Amy loved me, Amy fail'd me, Amy was a timid
child;
But your Judith—but your worldling—*she* had never
driven me wild.

She that holds the diamond necklace dearer than
the golden ring,
She that finds a winter sunset fairer than a morn
of Spring.

She that in her heart is brooding on his briefer
lease of life,
While she vows "till death shall part us," she the
would-be-widow wife.

She the worldling born of worldlings — father,
mother—be content,
Ev'n the homely farm can teach us there is some-
thing in descent.

Yonder in that chapel, slowly sinking now into the ground,
Lies the warrior, my forefather, with his feet upon the hound,

Cross'd! for once he sail'd the sea to crush the Moslem in his pride;
Dead the warrior, dead his glory, dead the cause in which he died.

Yet how often I and Amy in the mouldering aisle have stood,
Gazing for one pensive moment on that founder of our blood.

There again I stood to-day, and where of old we knelt in prayer,
Close beneath the casement crimson with the shield of Locksley—there,

All in white Italian marble, looking still as if she smiled,
Lies my Amy dead in child-birth, dead the mother, dead the child.

Dead—and sixty years ago, and dead her aged
husband now—
I this old white-headed dreamer stoopt and kiss'd
her marble brow.

Gone the fires of youth, the follies, furies, curses,
passionate tears,
Gone like fires and floods and earthquakes of the
planet's dawning years.

Fires that shook me once, but now to silent ashes
fall'n away.
Cold upon the dead volcano sleeps the gleam of
dying day.

Gone the tyrant of my youth, and mute below the
chancel stones,
All his virtues—I forgive them—black in white
above his bones.

Gone the comrades of my bivouac, some in fight
against the foe,
Some thro' age and slow diseases, gone as all on
earth will go,

Gone with whom for forty years my life in golden
sequence ran,
She with all the charm of woman, she with all the
breadth of man,

Strong in will and rich in wisdom, Edith, loyal,
lowly, sweet,
Feminine to her inmost heart, and feminine to her
tender feet,

Very woman of very woman, nurse of ailing body
and mind,
She that link'd again the broken chain that bound
me to my kind.

Here to-day was Amy with me, while I wander'd
down the coast,
Near us Edith's holy shadow, smiling at the slighter
ghost.

Gone our sailor son thy father, Leonard early lost
at sea;
Thou alone, my boy, of Amy's kin and mine art
left to me.

Gone thy tender-natured mother, wearying to be
left alone,
Pining for the stronger heart that once had beat
beside her own.

Truth, for Truth is Truth, he worshipt, being true
as he was brave;
Good, for Good is Good, he follow'd, yet he look'd
beyond the grave,

Wiser there than you, that crowning barren Death
as lord of all,
Deem this over-tragic drama's closing curtain is the
pall!

Beautiful was death in him, who saw the death, but
kept the deck,
Saving women and their babes, and sinking with
the sinking wreck,

Gone for ever! Ever? no—for since our dying race
began,
Ever, ever, and for ever was the leading light of
man.

Locksley Hall, etc. 2

Those that in barbarian burials kill'd the slave, and slew the wife,
Felt within themselves the sacred passion of the second life.

Indian warriors dream of ampler hunting grounds beyond the night;
Ev'n the black Australian dying hopes he shall return, a white.

Truth for truth, and good for good! The Good, the True, the Pure, the Just—
Take the charm "For ever" from them, and they crumble into dust.

Gone the cry of "Forward, Forward," lost within a growing gloom;
Lost, or only heard in silence from the silence of a tomb.

Half the marvels of my morning, triumphs over time and space,
Staled by frequence, shrunk by usage into commonest commonplace!

"Forward" rang the voices then, and of the many
mine was one.
Let us hush this cry of "Forward" till ten thousand
years have gone.

Far among the vanish'd races, old Assyrian kings
would flay
Captives whom they caught in battle—iron-hearted
victors they.

Ages after, while in Asia, he that led the wild Mo-
guls,
Timur built his ghastly tower of eighty thousand
human skulls,

Then, and here in Edward's time, an age of noblest
English names,
Christian conquerors took and flung the conquer'd
Christian into flames.

Love your enemy, bless your haters, said the Great-
est of the great;
Christian love among the Churches look'd the twin
of heathen hate.

From the golden alms of Blessing man had coin'd
himself a curse:
Rome of Cæsar, Rome of Peter, which was crueller?
which was worse?

France had shown a light to all men, preach'd a
Gospel, all men's good;
Celtic Demos rose a Demon, shriek'd and slaked the
light with blood.

Hope was ever on her mountain, watching till the
day begun—
Crown'd with sunlight—over darkness—from the
still unrisen sun.

Have we grown at last beyond the passions of the
primal clan?
"Kill your enemy, for you hate him," still, "your
enemy" was a man.

Have we sunk below them? peasants maim the help-
less horse, and drive
Innocent cattle under thatch, and burn the kindlier
brutes alive.

Brutes, the brutes are not your wrongers—burnt at
midnight, found at morn,
Twisted hard in mortal agony with their offspring,
born-unborn,

Clinging to the silent mother! Are we devils? are
we men?
Sweet St. Francis of Assisi, would that he were here
again,

He that in his Catholic wholeness used to call the
very flowers
Sisters, brothers—and the beasts—whose pains are
hardly less than ours!

Chaos, Cosmos! Cosmos, Chaos! who can tell how
all will end?
Read the wide world's annals, you, and take their
wisdom for your friend.

Hope the best, but hold the Present fatal daughter
of the Past,
Shape your heart to front the hour, but dream not
that the hour will last.

Ay, if dynamite and revolver leave you courage to
be wise:
When was age so cramm'd with menace? madness?
written, spoken lies?

Envy wears the mask of Love, and, laughing sober
fact to scorn,
Cries to Weakest as to Strongest, "Ye are equals,
equal-born."

Equal-born? O yes, if yonder hill be level with
the flat.
Charm us, Orator, till the Lion look no larger than
the Cat,

Till the Cat thro' that mirage of overheated language
loom
Larger than the Lion,—Demos end in working its
own doom.

Russia bursts our Indian barrier, shall we fight her?
shall we yield?
Pause! before you sound the trumpet, hear the voices
from the field.

Those three hundred millions under one Imperial
sceptre now,
Shall we hold them? shall we loose them? take the
suffrage of the plow.

Nay, but these would feel and follow Truth if only
you and you,
Rivals of realm-ruining party, when you speak were
wholly true.

Plowmen, Shepherds, have I found, and more than
once, and still could find,
Sons of God, and kings of men in utter nobleness
of mind,

Truthful, trustful, looking upward to the practised
hustings-liar;
So the Higher wields the Lower, while the Lower is
the Higher.

Here and there a cotter's babe is royal-born by
right divine;
Here and there my lord is lower than his oxen or
his swine.

Chaos, Cosmos! Cosmos, Chaos! once again the
sickening game;
Freedom, free to slay herself, and dying while they
shout her name.

Step by step we gain'd a freedom known to Europe,
known to all;
Step by step we rose to greatness, — thro' the
tonguesters we may fall.

You that woo the Voices—tell them "old experi-
ence is a fool,"
Teach your flatter'd kings that only those who
cannot read can rule.

Pluck the mighty from their seat, but set no meek
ones in their place;
Pillory Wisdom in your markets, pelt your offal at
her face.

Tumble Nature heel o'er head, and, yelling with the
yelling street,
Set the feet above the brain and swear the brain is
in the feet.

Bring the old dark ages back without the faith,
without the hope,
Break the State, the Church, the Throne, and roll
their ruins down the slope.

Authors—atheist, essayist, novelist, realist, rhymester,
play your part,
Paint the mortal shame of nature with the living
hues of Art.

Rip your brothers' vices open, strip your own foul
passions bare;
Down with Reticence, down with Reverence—for-
ward—naked—let them stare.

Feed the budding rose of boyhood with the drainage
of your sewer;
Send the drain into the fountain, lest the stream
should issue pure.

Set the maiden fancies wallowing in the troughs of
Zolaism,—
Forward, forward, ay and backward, downward too
into the abysm.

Do your best to charm the worst, to lower the rising
race of men;
Have we risen from out the beast, then back into
the beast again?

Only "dust to dust" for me that sicken at your law-
less din,
Dust in wholesome old-world dust before the newer
world begin.

Heated am I? you—you wonder—well, it scarce
becomes mine age—
Patience! let the dying actor mouth his last upon
the stage.

Cries of unprogressive dotage ere the dotard fall
asleep?
Noises of a current narrowing, not the music of a
deep?

Ay, for doubtless I am old, and think gray thoughts,
for I am gray:
After all the stormy changes shall we find a change-
less May?

After madness, after massacre, Jacobinism and
Jacquerie,
Some diviner force to guide us thro' the days I
shall not see?

When the schemes and all the systems, Kingdoms
and Republics fall,
Something kindlier, higher, holier—all for each and
each for all?

All the full-brain, half-brain races, led by Justice,
Love, and Truth;
All the millions one at length with all the visions
of my youth?

All diseases quench'd by Science, no man halt, or
deaf or blind;
Stronger ever born of weaker, lustier body, larger
mind?

Earth at last a warless world, a single race, a single
tongue!
I have seen her far away—for is not Earth as yet
so young?—

Every tiger madness muzzled, every serpent passion
kill'd,
Every grim ravine a garden, every blazing desert
till'd,

Robed in universal harvest up to either pole she
smiles,
Universal ocean softly washing all her warless
Isles.

Warless? when her tens are thousands, and her
thousands millions, then—
All her harvest all too narrow—who can fancy war-
less men?

Warless? war will die out late then. Will it ever?
late or soon?
Can it, till this outworn earth be dead as yon dead
world the moon?

Dead the new astronomy calls her. . . . On this day
and at this hour,
In this gap between the sandhills, whence you see
the Locksley tower,

Here we met, our latest meeting—Amy—sixty years
ago—
She and I—the moon was falling greenish thro' a
rosy glow,

Just above the gateway tower, and even where you
see her now—
Here we stood and claspt each other, swore the
seeming-deathless vow. . . .

Dead, but how her living glory lights the hall, the
dune, the grass!
Yet the moonlight is the sunlight, and the sun him-
self will pass.

Venus near her! smiling downward at this earthlier
earth of ours,
Closer on the Sun, perhaps a world of never fading
flowers.

Hesper, whom the poet call'd the Bringer home of
all good things.
All good things may move in Hesper, perfect peoples,
perfect kings.

Hesper—Venus—were we native to that splendour
or in Mars,
We should see the Globe we groan in, fairest of
their evening stars.

Could we dream of wars and carnage, craft and
madness, lust and spite,
Roaring London, raving Paris, in that point of
peaceful light?

Might we not in glancing heavenward on a star so
silver-fair,
Yearn, and clasp the hands and murmur, "Would
to God that we were there"?

Forward, backward, backward, forward, in the im-
measurable sea,
Sway'd by vaster ebbs and flows than can be known
to you or me.

All the suns—are these but symbols of innumerable
man,
Man or Mind that sees a shadow of the planner or
the plan?

Is there evil but on earth? or pain in every peopled
sphere?
Well be grateful for the sounding watchword,
"Evolution" here,

Evolution ever climbing after some ideal good,
And Reversion ever dragging Evolution in the
mud.

What are men that He should heed us? cried the
king of sacred song;
Insects of an hour, that hourly work their brother
insect wrong,

While the silent Heavens roll, and Suns along their
fiery way,
All their planets whirling round them, flash a mil-
lion miles a day.

Many an Æon moulded earth before her highest,
man, was born,
Many an Æon too may pass when earth is manless
and forlorn,

Earth so huge, and yet so bounded—pools of salt,
and plots of land—
Shallow skin of green and azure—chains of mountain, grains of sand!

Only That which made us, meant us to be mightier
by and by,
Set the sphere of all the boundless Heavens within
the human eye,

Sent the shadow of Himself, the boundless, thro'
the human soul;
Boundless inward, in the atom, boundless outward,
in the Whole.

* * * * *

Here is Locksley Hall, my grandson, here the lion-
guarded gate.
Not to-night in Locksley Hall—to-morrow—you, you
come so late.

Wreck'd—your train—or all but wreck'd? a shatter'd
wheel? a vicious boy!
Good, this forward, you that preach it, is it well to
wish you joy?

Is it well that while we range with Science, glorying in the Time,
City children soak and blacken soul and sense in city slime?

There among the glooming alleys Progress halts on palsied feet,
Crime and hunger cast our maidens by the thousand on the street.

There the Master scrimps his haggard sempstress of her daily bread,
There a single sordid attic holds the living and the dead.

There the smouldering fire of fever creeps across the rotted floor,
And the crowded couch of incest in the warrens of the poor.

Nay, your pardon, cry your "forward," yours are hope and youth, but I—
Eighty winters leave the dog too lame to follow with the cry,

Lame and old, and past his time, and passing now
into the night;
Yet I would the rising race were half as eager for
the light.

Light the fading gleam of Even? light the glimmer
of the dawn?
Aged eyes may take the growing glimmer for the
gleam withdrawn.

Far away beyond her myriad coming changes earth
will be
Something other than the wildest modern guess of
you and me.

Earth may reach her earthly-worst, or if she gain
her earthly-best,
Would she find her human offspring this ideal man
at rest?

Forward then, but still remember how the course of
Time will swerve,
Crook and turn upon itself in many a backward
streaming curve.

Not the Hall to-night, my grandson! Death and
Silence hold their own.
Leave the Master in the first dark hour of his last
sleep alone.

Worthier soul was he than I am, sound and honest,
rustic Squire,
Kindly landlord, boon companion—youthful jealousy
is a liar.

Cast the poison from your bosom, oust the mad-
ness from your brain.
Let the trampled serpent show you that you have
not lived in vain.

Youthful! youth and age are scholars yet but in the
lower school,
Nor is he the wisest man who never proved him-
self a fool.

Yonder lies our young sea-village—Art and Grace
are less and less:
Science grows and Beauty dwindles—roofs of slated
hideousness!

There is one old Hostel left us where they swing
the Locksley shield,
Till the peasant cow shall butt the "Lion passant"
from his field.

Poor old Heraldry, poor old History, poor old
Poetry, passing hence,
In the common deluge drowning old political com-
mon-sense!

Poor old voice of eighty crying after voices that
have fled!
All I loved are vanish'd voices, all my steps are on
the dead.

All the world is ghost to me, and as the phantom
disappears,
Forward far and far from here is all the hope of
eighty years.

* * * * *

In this Hostel—I remember—I repent it o'er his
grave—
Like a clown—by chance he met me—I refused
the hand he gave.

From that casement where the trailer mantles all
the mouldering bricks—
I was then in early boyhood, Edith but a child of
six—

While I shelter'd in this archway from a day of
driving showers—
Peept the winsome face of Edith like a flower
among the flowers.

Here to-night! the Hall to-morrow, when they toll
the Chapel bell!
Shall I hear in one dark room a wailing, "I have
loved thee well."

Then a peal that shakes the portal—one has come
to claim his bride,
Her that shrank, and put me from her, shriek'd,
and started from my side—

Silent echoes! You, my Leonard, use and not abuse
your day,
Move among your people, know them, follow him
who led the way,

Strove for sixty widow'd years to help his homelier
brother men,
Served the poor, and built the cottage, raised the
school, and drain'd the fen.

Hears he now the Voice that wrong'd him? who
shall swear it cannot be?
Earth would never touch her worst, were one in
fifty such as he.

Ere she gain her Heavenly-best, a God must mingle
with the game:
Nay, there may be those about us whom we neither
see nor name,

Felt within us as ourselves, the Powers of Good,
the Powers of Ill,
Strowing balm, or shedding poison in the fountains
of the Will.

Follow you the Star that lights a desert pathway,
yours or mine.
Forward, till you see the highest Human Nature is
divine.

Follow Light, and do the Right—for man can half-
control his doom—
Till you find the deathless Angel seated in the
vacant tomb.

Forward, let the stormy moment fly and mingle
with the Past.
I that loathed, have come to love him. Love will
conquer at the last.

Gone at eighty, mine own age, and I and you will
bear the pall;
Then I leave thee Lord and Master, latest Lord of
Locksley Hall.

THE FLEET.*

I.

YOU, you, *if* you shall fail to understand
What England is, and what her all-in-all,
On you will come the curse of all the land,
Should this old England fall
Which Nelson left so great.

* The speaker said that "he should like to be assured that other outlying portions of the Empire, the Crown colonies, and important coaling stations were being as promptly and as thoroughly fortified as the various capitals of the self-governing colonies. He was credibly informed this was not so. It was impossible, also, not to feel some degree of anxiety about the efficacy of present provision to defend and protect, by means of swift, well-armed cruisers, the immense mercantile fleet of the Empire. A third source of anxiety, so far as the colonies were concerned, was the apparently insufficient provision for the rapid manufacture of armaments and their prompt despatch when ordered to their colonial destination. Hence the necessity for manufacturing appliances equal to the requirements, not of Great Britain alone, but of the whole Empire. But the keystone of the whole was the necessity for an overwhelmingly powerful fleet and efficient defence for all necessary coaling stations. This was as essential for the colonies as for Great Britain. It was the

II.

His isle, the mightiest Ocean-power on earth,
Our own fair isle, the lord of every sea—
Her fuller franchise—what would that be worth—
Her ancient fame of Free—
Were she . . . a fallen state?

III.

Her dauntless army scatter'd, and so small,
Her island-myriads fed from alien lands—
The fleet of England is her all-in-all;
Her fleet is in your hands,
And in her fleet her Fate.

one condition for the continuance of the Empire. All that Continental Powers did with respect to armies England should effect with her navy. It was essentially a defensive force, and could be moved rapidly from point to point, but it should be equal to all that was expected from it. It was to strengthen the fleet that colonists would first readily tax themselves, because they realised how essential a powerful fleet was to the safety, not only of that extensive commerce sailing in every sea, but ultimately to the security of the distant portions of the Empire. Who could estimate the loss involved in even a brief period of disaster to the Imperial Navy? Any amount of money timely expended in preparation would be quite insignificant when compared with the possible calamity he had referred to."—*Extract from Sir Graham Berry's Speech at the Colonial Institute, 9th November* 1886.

IV.

You, you, that have the ordering of her fleet,
If you should only compass her disgrace,
When all men starve, the wild mob's million feet
Will kick you from your place,
But then too late, too late.

OPENING OF THE INDIAN AND COLONIAL EXHIBITION BY THE QUEEN.

WRITTEN AT THE REQUEST OF THE PRINCE OF WALES.

I.

WELCOME, welcome with one voice!
In your welfare we rejoice,
Sons and brothers that have sent,
From isle and cape and continent,
Produce of your field and flood,
Mount and mine, and primal wood;
Works of subtle brain and hand,
And splendours of the morning land,
Gifts from every British zone;
Britons, hold your own!

II.

May we find, as ages run,
The mother featured in the son;
And may yours for ever be
That old strength and constancy

Which has made your fathers great
In our ancient island State,
And wherever her flag fly,
Glorying between sea and sky,
Makes the might of Britain known;
Britons, hold your own!

III.

Britain fought her sons of yore—
Britain failed; and never more,
Careless of our growing kin,
Shall we sin our fathers' sin,
Men that in a narrower day—
Unprophetic rulers they—
Drove from out the mother's nest
That young eagle of the West
To forage for herself alone;
Britons, hold your own!

IV.

Sharers of our glorious past,
Brothers, must we part at last?
Shall we not thro' good and ill
Cleave to one another still?

Britain's myriad voices call,
"Sons, be welded each and all,
Into one imperial whole,
One with Britain, heart and soul!
One life, one flag, one fleet, one Throne!"
Britons, hold your own!

THE PROMISE OF MAY.

"A surface man of theories, true to none."

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

FARMER DOBSON.
MR. PHILIP EDGAR (*afterwards* MR. HAROLD).
FARMER STEER (DORA *and* EVA'S *Father*).
MR. WILSON (*a Schoolmaster*).
HIGGINS, JAMES, DAN SMITH, JACKSON, ALLEN — *Farm Labourers.*
DORA STEER.
EVA STEER.
SALLY ALLEN, MILLY — *Farm Servants.*

Farm Servants, Labourers, etc.

THE PROMISE OF MAY.

ACT I.

SCENE.—*Before Farmhouse.*

Farming Men and Women. Farming Men carrying forms, &c., Women carrying baskets of knives and forks, &c.

1ST FARMING MAN.

Be thou a-gawin' to the long barn?

2ND FARMING MAN.

Ay, to be sewer! Be thou?

1ST FARMING MAN.

Why, o' coorse, fur it be the owd man's birth-daäy. He be heighty this very daäy, and 'e telled all on us to be i' the long barn by one o'clock, fur he'll gie us a big dinner, and haäfe th' parish 'll be theer, an' Miss Dora, an' Miss Eva, an' all!

2ND FARMING MAN.

Miss Dora be coomed back, then?

1ST FARMING MAN.

Ay, haäfe an hour ago. She be in theer now. (*Pointing to house*). Owd Steer wur afeärd she wouldn't be back i' time to keep his birthdaäy, and he wur in a tew about it all the murnin'; and he sent me wi' the gig to Littlechester to fetch 'er; and 'er an' the owd man they fell a kissin' o' one another like two sweet'arts i' the poorch as soon as he clapt eyes of 'er.

2ND FARMING MAN.

Foälks says he likes Miss Eva the best.

1ST FARMING MAN.

Naäy, I knaws nowt o' what foälks says, an' I caäres nowt neither. Foälks doesn't hallus knaw thessens; but sewer I be, they be two o' the purtiest gels ye can see of a summer murnin'.

2ND FARMING MAN.

Beänt Miss Eva gone off a bit of 'er good looks o' laäte?

1ST FARMING MAN.

Noä, not a bit.

2ND FARMING MAN.

Why coöm awaäy, then, to the long barn.

[*Exeunt.*

DORA *looks out of window.* *Enter* DOBSON.

DORA (*singing*).

The town lay still in the low sun-light,
The hen cluckt late by the white farm gate,
The maid to her dairy came in from the cow,
The stock-dove coo'd at the fall of night,
The blossom had open'd on every bough;
O joy for the promise of May, of May,
O joy for the promise of May.

(*Nodding at* DOBSON.) I'm coming down, Mr. Dobson. I haven't seen Eva yet. Is she anywhere in the garden?

DOBSON.

Noä, Miss. I ha'n't seed 'er neither.

DORA (*enters singing*).

But a red fire woke in the heart of the town,
And a fox from the glen ran away with the hen,
And a cat to the cream, and a rat to the cheese;
And the stock-dove coo'd, till a kite dropt down,
And a salt wind burnt the blossoming trees;

O grief for the promise of May, of May,
O grief for the promise of May.

I don't know why I sing that song; I don't love it.

DOBSON.

Blessings on your pretty voice, Miss Dora. Wheer did they larn ye that?

DORA.

In Cumberland, Mr. Dobson.

DOBSON.

An' how did ye leäve the owd uncle i' Coomberland?

DORA.

Getting better, Mr. Dobson. But he'll never be the same man again.

DOBSON.

An' how d'ye find the owd man 'ere?

DORA.

As well as ever. I came back to keep his birthday.

DOBSON.

Well, I be coomed to keep his birthdaäy an' all. The owd man be heighty to-daäy, beänt he?

DORA.

Yes, Mr. Dobson. And the day's bright like a friend, but the wind east like an enemy. Help me to move this bench for him into the sun. (*They move bench*). No, not that way—here, under the apple tree. Thank you. Look how full of rosy blossom it is. [*Pointing to apple tree.*

DOBSON.

Three be redder blossoms nor them, Miss Dora.

DORA.

Where do they blow, Mr. Dobson?

DOBSON.

Under your eyes, Miss Dora.

DORA.

Do they?

DOBSON.

And your eyes be as blue as—

DORA.

What, Mr. Dobson? A butcher's frock?

DOBSON.

Noä, Miss Dora; as blue as——

DORA.

Bluebell, harebell, speedwell, bluebottle, succory, forget-me-not?

DOBSON.

Noä, Miss Dora; as blue as——

DORA.

The sky? or the sea on a blue day?

DOBSON.

Naäy then. I meän'd they be as blue as violets.

DORA.

Are they?

DOBSON.

Theer ye goäs ageän, Miss, niver believing owt I says to ye—hallus a-fobbing ma off, tho' ye knaws I love ye. I warrants ye'll think moor o' this young Squire Edgar as ha' coomed among us—the Lord knaws how—ye'll think more on 's little finger than hall my hand at the haltar.

DORA.

Perhaps, Master Dobson. I can't tell, for I have never seen him. But my sister wrote that he was mighty pleasant, and had no pride in him.

DOBSON.

He'll be arter you now, Miss Dora.

DORA.

Will he? How can I tell?

DOBSON.

He's been arter Miss Eva, haän't he?

DORA.

Not that I know.

DOBSON.

Didn't I spy 'em a-sitting i' the woodbine harbour togither?

DORA.

What of that? Eva told me that he was taking her likeness. He's an artist.

DOBSON.

What's a hartist? I doänt believe he's iver a 'eart under his waistcoat. And I tells ye what, Miss Dora: he's no respect for the Queen, or the parson, or the justice o' peace, or owt. I ha' heärd 'm a-gawin' on 'ud make your 'air—God bless it! —stan' on end. And wuss nor that. When theer wur a meeting o' farmers at Littlechester t'other daäy, and they was all a-crying out at the bad times, he cooms up, and he calls out among our oän men, "The land belongs to the people!"

DORA.

And what did *you* say to that?

DOBSON.

Well, I says, s'pose my pig's the land, and you says it belongs to the parish, and theer be a thousand i' the parish, taäkin' in the women and childer; and s'pose I kills my pig, and gi'es it among 'em, why there wudn't be a dinner for nawbody, and I should ha' lost the pig.

DORA.

And what did he say to that?

DOBSON.

Nowt—what could he saäy? But I taäkes 'im fur a bad lot and a burn fool, and I haätes the very sight on him.

DORA.

(*Looking at* DOBSON.) Master Dobson, you are a comely man to look at.

DOBSON.

I thank you for that, Miss Dora, onyhow.

DORA.

Ay, but you turn right ugly when you're in an ill temper; and I promise you that if you forget

yourself in your behaviour to this gentleman, my father's friend, I will never change word with you again.

Enter FARMING MAN *from barn.*

FARMING MAN.

Miss, the farming men 'ull hev their dinner i' the long barn, and the master 'ud be straänge an' pleased if you'd step in fust, and see that all be right and reg'lar fur 'em afoor he coöm.

[*Exit.*

DORA.

I go. Master Dobson, did you hear what I said?

DOBSON.

Yeas, yeas! I'll not meddle wi' 'im if he doänt meddle wi' meä. (*Exit* DORA.) Coomly, says she. I niver thowt o' mysen i' that waäy; but if she'd taäke to ma i' that waäy, or ony waäy, I'd slaäve out my life fur 'er. "Coomly to look at," says she —but she said it spiteful-like. To look at—yeas, "coomly"; and she mayn't be so fur out theer. But if that be nowt to she, then it be nowt to me. (*Looking off stage.*) Schoolmaster! Why if Steer han't haxed schoolmaster to dinner, thaw 'e knaws I was hallus ageän heving schoolmaster i' the parish! fur

him as be handy wi' a book bean't but haäfe a hand at a pitchfork.

Enter WILSON.

Well, Wilson. I seed that one cow o' thine i' the pinfold ageän as I wur a-coomin' 'ere.

WILSON.

Very likely, Mr. Dobson. She *will* break fence. I can't keep her in order.

DOBSON.

An' if tha can't keep thy one cow i' horder, how can tha keep all thy scholards i' horder? But let that goä by. What dost a knaw o' this Mr. Hedgar as be a-lodgin' wi' ye? I coom'd upon 'im t'other daäy lookin' at the coontry, then a-scrattin upon a bit o' paäper, then a-lookin' agean; and I taäked 'im fur soom sort of a land-surveyor—but a beänt.

WILSON.

He's a Somersetshire man, and a very civil-spoken gentleman.

DOBSON.

Gentleman! What be he a-doing here ten mile an' moor fro' a raäil? We laäys out o' the waäy fur gentlefoälk altogither—leästwaäys they niver cooms 'ere but fur the trout i' our beck, fur they be

knaw'd as far as Littlechester. But 'e doänt fish neither.

WILSON.

Well, it's no sin in a gentleman not to fish.

DOBSON.

Noä, but I haätes 'im.

WILSON.

Better step out of his road, then, for he's walking to us, and with a book in his hand.

DOBSON.

An' I haätes booöks an' all, fur they puts foälk off the owd waäys.

Enter EDGAR, *reading—not seeing* DOBSON *and* WILSON.

EDGAR.

This author, with his charm of simple style
And close dialectic, all but proving man
An automatic series of sensations,
Has often numb'd me into apathy
Against the unpleasant jolts of this rough road
That breaks off short into the abysses—made me
A Quietist taking all things easily.

DOBSON.

(*Aside.*) There mun be summut wrong theer, Wilson, fur I doänt understan' it.

WILSON.

(*Aside.*) Nor I either, Mr. Dobson.

DOBSON.

(*Scornfully.*) An' thou doänt understan' it neither—and thou schoolmaster an' all.

EDGAR.

What can a man, then, live for but sensations,
Pleasant ones? men of old would undergo
Unpleasant for the sake of pleasant ones
Hereafter, like the Moslem beauties waiting
To clasp their lovers by the golden gates.
For me, whose cheerless Houris after death
Are Night and Silence, pleasant ones—the while—
If possible, here! to crop the flower and pass.

DOBSON.

Well, I never 'eärd the likes o' that afoor.

WILSON.

(*Aside.*) But I have, Mr. Dobson. It's the old Scripture text, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." I'm sorry for it, for, tho' he never comes to church, I thought better of him.

EDGAR.

"What are we," says the blind old man in Lear?
"As flies to the Gods; they kill us for their sport."

DOBSON.

(*Aside.*) Then the owd man i' Lear should be shaämed of hissen, but noän o' the parishes goäs by that naäme 'ereabouts.

EDGAR.

The Gods! but they, the shadows of ourselves,
Have past for ever. It is Nature kills,
And not for *her* sport either. She knows nothing.
Man only knows, the worse for him! for why
Cannot *he* take his pastime like the flies?
And if my pleasure breed another's pain,
Well—is not that the course of Nature too,
From the dim dawn of Being—her main law
Whereby she grows in beauty—that her flies
Must massacre each other? this poor Nature!

DOBSON.

Natur! Natur! Well, it be i' *my* natur to knock 'im o' the 'eäd now; but I weänt.

EDGAR.

A Quietist taking all things easily—why—

Have I been dipping into this again
To steel myself against the leaving her?

(*Closes book seeing* WILSON.)

Good day!

WILSON.

Good day, sir.

(DOBSON *looks hard at* EDGAR.)

EDGAR.

(*To* DOBSON.) Have I the pleasure, friend, of knowing you?

DOBSON.

Dobson.

EDGAR.

Good day, then, Dobson. [*Exit.*

DOBSON.

"Good daäy then, Dobson!" Civil-spoke' indeed! Why, Wilson, tha 'eärd 'im thysen—the feller couldn't find a Mister in his mouth fur me, as farms five hoonderd haäcre.

WILSON.

You never find one for me, Mr. Dobson.

DOBSON.

Noä, fur thou be nobbut schoolmaster; but I taäkes 'im fur a Lunnun swindler, and a burn fool.

WILSON.

He can hardly be both, and he pays me regular every Saturday.

DOBSON.

Yeas; but I haätes 'im.

Enter STEER, FARM MEN *and* WOMEN.

STEER.

(*Goes and sits under apple tree.*) Hev' ony o' ye seen Eva?

DOBSON.

Noä, Mr. Steer.

STEER.

Well, I reckons they'll hev' a fine cider-crop to-year if the blossom 'owds. Good murnin', neighbours, and the saäme to you, my men. I taäkes it kindly of all o' you that you be coomed—what's the newspaäper word, Wilson?—celebrate—to celebrate my birthdaäy i' this fashion. Niver man 'ed better friends, and I will saäy niver master 'ed better men: fur thaw I may ha' fallen out wi' ye sometimes, the fault, mebbe, wur as much mine as yours; and, thaw I says it mysen, niver men 'ed a better master—and I knaws what men be, and what masters be, fur I wur nobbut a laäbourer, and now I be a landlord—burn a plowman, and now, as far

as money goäs, I be a gentleman, thaw I beänt naw scholard, fur I 'ednt naw time to maäke mysen a scholard while I wur maäkin' mysen a gentleman, but I ha taäen good care to turn out boäth my darters right down fine laädies.

DOBSON.

An' soä they be.

1ST FARMING MAN.

Soä they be! soä they be!

2ND FARMING MAN.

The Lord bless boath on 'em!

3RD FARMING MAN.

An' the saäme to you, Master.

4TH FARMING MAN.

And long life to boath on 'em. An' the saäme to you, Master Steer, likewise.

STEER.

Thank ye!

Enter EVA.

Wheer 'asta been?

EVA.

(*Timidly.*) Many happy returns of the day, father.

STEER.

They can't be many, my dear, but I 'oäpes they'll be 'appy.

DOBSON.

Why, tha looks haäle anew to last to a hoonderd.

STEER.

An' why shouldn't I last to a hoonderd? Haäle! why shouldn't I be haäle? fur thaw I be heighty this very daäy, I niver 'es sa much as one pin's prick of paäin; an' I can taäke my glass along wi' the youngest, fur I niver touched a drop of owt till my oän wedding-daäy, an' then I wur turned huppads o' sixty. Why shouldn't I be haäle? I ha' plowed the ten-aäcre—it be mine now—afoor ony o' ye wur burn—ye all knaws the ten-aäcre—I mun ha' plowed it moor nor a hoonderd times; hallus hup at sunrise, and I'd drive the plow straäit as a line right i' the faäce o' the sun, then back ageän, a-follering my oän shadder—then hup ageän i' the faäce o' the sun. Eh! how the sun 'ud shine, and the larks 'ud sing i' them daäys, and the smell o' the mou'd an' all. Eh! if I could ha' gone on wi' the plowin' nobbut the smell o' the mou'd 'ud ha' maäde ma live as long as Jerusalem.

EVA.

Methusaleh, father.

STEER.

Ay, lass, but when thou be as owd as me thou'll put one word fur another as I does.

DOBSON.

But, Steer, thaw thou be haäle anew I seed tha a-limpin' up just now wi' the roomatics i' the knee.

STEER.

Roomatics! Noä; I laäme't my knee last night running arter a thief. Beänt there housebreäkers down i' Littlechester, Dobson—doänt ye hear of ony?

DOBSON.

Ay, that there be. Immanuel Goldsmiths was broke into o' Monday night, and ower a hoonderd pounds worth o' rings stolen.

STEER.

So I thowt, and I heärd the winder—that's the winder at the end o' the passage, that goäs by thy chaumber. (*Turning to* EVA.) Why, lass, what maäkes tha sa red? Did 'e git into thy chaumber?

EVA.

Father!

STEER.

Well, I runned arter thief i' the dark, and fell

ageän coalscuttle and my kneeä gev waäy, or I'd ha' cotched 'im, but afoor I coomed up he got thruff the winder ageän.

EVA.

Got thro' the window again?

STEER.

Ay, but he left the mark of 'is foot i' the flower-bed; now theer be noän o' my men, thinks I to mysen, 'ud ha' done it 'cep' it were Dan Smith, fur I cotched 'm once a-steälin' coäls, an' I sent fur 'im, an' I measured his foot wi' the mark i' the bed, but it wouldn't fit—seeäms to me the mark wur maäde by a Lunnun boot. (*Looks at* EVA.) Why, now, what maäkes tha sa white?

EVA.

Fright, father!

STEER.

Maäke thysen eäsy. I'll hev the winder naäiled up, and put Towser under it.

EVA.

(*Clasping her hands.*) No, no, father! Towser'll tear him all to pieces.

STEER.

Let him keep awaäy, then; but coom, coom!

let's be gawin. They ha' broached a barrel of aäle i' the long barn, and the fiddler be theer, and the lads and lasses 'ull hev a dance.

EVA.

(*Aside.*) Dance! small heart have I to dance. I should seem to be dancing upon a grave.

STEER.

Wheer be Mr. Edgar? about the premises?

DOBSON.

Hallus about the premises!

STEER.

So much the better, so much the better. I likes 'im, and Eva likes 'im. Eva can do owt wi' im; look for 'im, Eva, and bring 'im to the barn. He 'ant naw pride in 'im, and we'll git 'im to speechify for us arter dinner.

EVA.

Yes, father! [*Exit.*

STEER.

Coom along then, all the rest o' ye! Church-warden be a coomin, thaw me and 'im we niver 'grees about the tithe; and Parson mebbe, thaw he niver mended that gap i' the glebe fence as I telled 'im; and Blacksmith, thaw he niver shoes a herse to

my likings; and Baäker, thaw I sticks to hoäm-maäde—but all on 'em welcome, all on 'em welcome; and I've hed the long barn cleared out of all the machines, and the sacks, and the taäters, and the mangles, and theer'll be room anew for all o' ye. Foller me.

ALL.

Yeas, yeas! Three cheers for Mr. Steer!

[*All exeunt except* DOBSON *into barn.*

Enter EDGAR.

DOBSON (*who is going, turns*).

Squire!—if so be you be a squire.

EDGAR.

Dobbins, I think.

DOBSON.

Dobbins, you thinks; and I thinks ye weärs a Lunnun boot.

EDGAR.

Well?

DOBSON.

And I thinks I'd like to taäke the measure o' your foot.

EDGAR.

Ay, if you'd like to measure your own length upon the grass.

DOBSON."

Coom, coom, that's a good un. Why, I could throw four o' ye; but I promised one of the Misses I wouldn't meddle wi' ye, an I weänt.

[*Exit into barn.*

EDGAR.

Jealous of me with Eva! Is it so?
Well, tho' I grudge the pretty jewel, that I
Have worn, to such a clod, yet that might be
The best way out of it, if the child could keep
Her counsel. I am sure I wish her happy.
But I must free myself from the entanglement.
I have all my life before me—so has she—
Give her a month or two, and her affections
Will flower toward the light in some new face.
Still I am half-afraid to meet her now.
She will urge marriage on me. I hate tears.
Marriage is but an old tradition. I hate
Traditions, ever since my narrow father,
After my frolic with his tenant's girl,
Made younger elder son, violated the whole
Tradition of our land, and left his heir,
Born, happily, with some sense of art, to live
By brush and pencil. By and by, when Thought
Comes down among the crowd, and man perceives
that

The lost gleam of an after-life but leaves him
A beast of prey in the dark, why then the crowd
May wreak my wrongs upon my wrongers. Marriage!
That fine, fat, hook-nosed uncle of mine, old
Harold,
Who leaves me all his land at Littlechester,
He, too, would oust me from his will, if I
Made such a marriage. And marriage in itself—
The storm is hard at hand will sweep away
Thrones, churches, ranks, traditions, customs, mar-
riage
One of the feeblest! Then the man, the woman,
Following their best affinities, will each
Bid their old bond farewell with smiles, not tears;
Good wishes, not reproaches; with no fear
Of the world's gossiping clamour, and no need
Of veiling their desires.
Conventionalism,
Who shrieks by day at what she does by night,
Would call this vice; but one time's vice may be
The virtue of another; and Vice and Virtue
Are but two masks of self; and what hereafter
Shall mark out Vice from Virtue in the gulf
Of never-dawning darkness?

Enter EVA.

My sweet Eva,

Where have you lain in ambush all the morning?
They say your sister, Dora, has return'd,
And that should make you happy, if you love her!
But you look troubled.

EVA.

Oh, I love her so,
I was afraid of her, and I hid myself.
We never kept a secret from each other;
She would have seen at once into my trouble,
And ask'd me what I could not answer. Oh, Philip,
Father heard you last night. Our savage mastiff,
That all but kill'd the beggar, will be placed
Beneath the window, Philip.

EDGAR.

Savage, is he?
What matters? Come, give me your hand and kiss me
This beautiful May-morning.

EVA.

The most beautiful
May we have had for many years!

EDGAR.

And here
Is the most beautiful morning of this May.

Nay, you must smile upon me! There—you make
The May and morning still more beautiful,
You, the most beautiful blossom of the May.

EVA.

Dear Philip, all the world is beautiful
If we were happy, and could chime in with it.

EDGAR.

True; for the senses, love, are for the world;
That for the senses.

EVA.

Yes.

EDGAR.

And when the man,
The child of evolution, flings aside
His swaddling-bands, the morals of the tribe,
He, following his own instincts as his God,
Will enter on the larger golden age;
No pleasure then taboo'd: for when the tide
Of full democracy has overhelm'd
This Old world, from that flood will rise the New,
Like the Love-goddess with no bridal veil,
Ring, trinket of the Church, but naked Nature
In all her loveliness.

EVA.

What are you saying?

EDGAR.

That, if we did not strain to make ourselves
Better and higher than Nature, we might be
As happy as the bees there at their honey
In these sweet blossoms.

EVA.

Yes; how sweet they smell!

EDGAR.

There! let me break some off for you.

[*Breaking branch off.*

EVA.

My thanks.
But, look, how wasteful of the blossom you are!
One, two, three, four, five, six—you have robb'd
poor father
Of ten good apples. Oh, I forgot to tell you
He wishes you to dine along with us,
And speak for him after—you that are so clever!

EDGAR.

I grieve I cannot; but, indeed——

EVA.

What is it?

EDGAR.

Well, business. I must leave you, love, to-day.

EVA.

Leave me, to-day! And when will you return?

EDGAR.

I cannot tell precisely; but——

EVA.

But what?

EDGAR.

I trust, my dear, we shall be always friends.

EVA.

After all that has gone between us—friends!
What, only friends? [*Drops branch.*

EDGAR.

All that has gone between us
Should surely make us friends.

EVA.

But keep us lovers.

EDGAR.

Child, do you love me now?

EVA.

Yes, now and ever.

EDGAR.

Then you should wish us both to love for ever.
But, if you *will* bind love to one for ever,

Altho' at first he take his bonds for flowers,
As years go on, he feels them press upon him,
Begins to flutter in them, and at last
Breaks thro' them, and so flies away for ever;
While, had you left him free use of his wings,
Who knows that he had ever dream'd of flying?

EVA.

But all that sounds so wicked and so strange;
"Till death us part"—those are the only words,
The true ones—nay, and those not true enough,
For they that love do not believe that death
Will part them. Why do you jest with me, and try
To fright me? Tho' you are a gentleman,
I but a farmer's daughter——

EDGAR.

Tut! you talk
Old feudalism. When the great Democracy
Makes a new world——

EVA.

And if you be not jesting,
Neither the old world, nor the new, nor father,
Sister, nor you, shall ever see me more.

EDGAR (*moved*).

Then—(*aside*) Shall I say it?—(*aloud*) fly with me to-day.

EVA.

No! Philip, Philip, if you do not marry me,
I shall go mad for utter shame and die.

EDGAR.

Then, if we needs must be conventional,
When shall your parish-parson bawl our banns
Before your gaping clowns?

EVA.

Not in our church—
I think I scarce could hold my head up there.
Is there no other way?

EDGAR.

Yes, if you cared
To fee an over-opulent superstition,
Then they would grant you what they call a licence
To marry. Do you wish it?

EVA.

Do I wish it?

EDGAR.

In London.

EVA.

You will write to me?

EDGAR.

I will.

EVA.

And I will fly to you thro' the night, the storm—
Yes, tho' the fire should run along the ground,
As once it did in Egypt. Oh, you see,
I was just out of school, I had no mother—
My sister far away—and you, a gentleman,
Told me to trust you: yes, in everything—
That was the only *true* love; and I trusted—
Oh, yes, indeed, I would have died for you.
How could you—Oh, how could you?—nay, how could I?
But now you will set all right again, and I
Shall not be made the laughter of the village,
And poor old father not die miserable.

DORA (*singing in the distance*).

"O joy for the promise of May, of May,
O joy for the promise of May."

EDGAR.

Speak not so loudly; that must be your sister.
You never told her, then, of what has past
Between us.

EVA.

Never!

EDGAR.

Do not till I bid you.

EVA.

No, Philip, no. [*Turns away.*

EDGAR (*moved*).

How gracefully there she stands
Weeping—the little Niobe! What! we prize
The statue or the picture all the more
When we have made them ours! Is she less love-
able,
Less lovely, being wholly mine? To stay—
Follow my art among these quiet fields,
Live with these honest folk——
And play the fool!
No! she that gave herself to me so easily
Will yield herself as easily to another.

EVA.

Did you speak, Philip?

EDGAR.

Nothing more, farewell.
[*They embrace.*

DORA (*coming nearer*).

"O grief for the promise of May, of May,
O grief for the promise of May."

EDGAR (*still embracing her*).

Keep up your heart until we meet again.

EVA.

If that should break before we meet again?

EDGAR.

Break! nay, but call for Philip when you will,
And he returns.

EVA.

Heaven hears you, Philip Edgar!

EDGAR (*moved*).

And *he* would hear you even from the grave.
Heaven curse him if he come not at your call!

[*Exit.*

Enter DORA.

DORA.

Well, Eva!

EVA.

Oh, Dora, Dora, how long you have been away from home! Oh, how often I have wished for you! It seemed to me that we were parted for ever.

DORA.

For ever, you foolish child! What's come over you? We parted like the brook yonder about the alder island, to come together again in a moment and to go on together again, till one of us be married. But where is this Mr. Edgar whom you

praised so in your first letters? You haven't even mentioned him in your last?

EVA.

He has gone to London.

DORA.

Ay, child; and you look thin and pale. Is it for his absence? Have you fancied yourself in love with him? That's all nonsense, you know, such a baby as you are. But you shall tell me all about it.

EVA.

Not now—presently. Yes, I have been in trouble, but I am happy—I think, quite happy now.

DORA (*taking* EVA'S *hand*).

Come, then, and make them happy in the long barn, for father is in his glory, and there is a piece of beef like a house-side, and a plum-pudding as big as the round haystack. But see they are coming out for the dance already. Well, my child, let us join them.

Enter all from barn laughing. EVA *sits reluctantly under apple tree.* STEER *enters smoking, sits by* EVA.

Dance.

ACT II.

Five years have elapsed between Acts I. and II.

SCENE.—*A meadow. On one side a pathway going over a rustic bridge. At back the farmhouse among trees. In the distance a church spire.*

DOBSON *and* DORA.

DOBSON.

So the owd uncle i' Coomberland be deäd, Miss Dora, beänt he?

DORA.

Yes, Mr. Dobson, I've been attending on his death-bed and his burial.

DOBSON.

It be five year sin' ye went afoor to him, and it seems to me nobbut t'other day. Hesn't he left ye nowt?

DORA.

No, Mr. Dobson.

DOBSON.

But he were mighty fond o' ye, warn't he?

DORA.

Fonder of poor Eva—like everybody else.

DOBSON (*handing* DORA *basket of roses*).

Not like me, Miss Dora; and I ha' browt these roses to ye—I forgits what they calls 'em, but I hallus gi'ed soom on 'em to Miss Eva at this time o' year. Will ya taäke 'em? fur Miss Eva, she set the bush by my dairy winder afoor she went to school at Littlechester—so I allus browt soom on 'em to her; and now she be gone, will ye taäke 'em, Miss Dora?

DORA.

I thank you. They tell me that yesterday you mentioned her name too suddenly before my father. See that you do not do so again!

DOBSON.

Noä; I knaws a deäl better now. I seed how the owd man wur vext.

DORA.

I take them, then, for Eva's sake.

[*Takes basket, places some in her dress.*

DOBSON.

Eva's saäke. Yeas. Poor gel, poor gel! I can't abeär to think on 'er now, fur I'd ha' done owt fur

'er mysen; an' ony o' Steer's men, an' ony o' my men 'ud ha' done owt fur 'er, an' all the parish 'ud ha' done owt fur 'er, fur we was all on us proud on 'er, an' them theer be soom of her oän roses, an' she wur as sweet as ony on 'em—the Lord bless 'er —'er oän sen; an' weänt ye taake 'em now, Miss Dora, fur 'er saäke an' fur my saäke an' all?

DORA.

Do you want them back again?

DOBSON.

Noä, noä! Keep 'em. But I hed a word to saäy to ye.

DORA.

Why, Farmer, you should be in the hayfield looking after your men; you couldn't have more splendid weather.

DOBSON.

I be a going theer; but I thowt I'd bring tha them roses fust. The weather's well anew, but the glass be a bit shaäky. S'iver we've led moäst on it.

DORA.

Ay! but you must not be too sudden with it either, as you were last year, when you put it in green, and your stack caught fire.

DOBSON.

I were insured, Miss, an' I lost nowt by it. But I weänt be too sudden wi' it; and I feel sewer, Miss Dora, that I ha' been noän too sudden wi' you, fur I ha' sarved for ye well nigh as long as the man sarved for 'is sweet'art i' Scriptur'. Weänt ye gi'e me a kind answer at last?

DORA.

I have no thought of marriage, my friend. We have been in such grief these five years, not only on my sister's account, but the ill success of the farm, and the debts, and my father's breaking down, and his blindness. How could I think of leaving him?

DOBSON.

Eh, but I be well to do; and if ye would nob-but hev me, I would taäke the owd blind man to my oän fireside. You should hev him allus wi' ye.

DORA.

You are generous, but it cannot be. I cannot love you; nay, I think I never can be brought to love any man. It seems to me that I hate men, ever since my sister left us. Oh, see here. (*Pulls out a letter.*) I wear it next my heart. Poor sister, I had it five years ago. "Dearest Dora,—I have

lost myself, and am lost for ever to you and my poor father. I thought Mr. Edgar the best of men, and he has proved himself the worst. Seek not for me, or you may find me at the bottom of the river. —Eva."

DOBSON.

Be that my fault?

DORA.

No; but how should I, with this grief still at my heart, take to the milking of your cows, the fatting of your calves, the making of your butter, and the managing of your poultry?

DOBSON.

Naäy, but I hev an owd woman as 'ud see to all that; and you should sit i' your oän parlour quite like a laädy, ye should!

DORA.

It cannot be.

DOBSON.

And plaäy the pianner, if ye liked, all daäy long, like a laädy, ye should an' all.

DORA.

It cannot be.

DOBSON.

And I would loove tha moor nor ony gentleman 'ud loove tha.

DORA.

No, no; it cannot be.

DOBSON.

And p'raps ye hears 'at I soomtimes taäkes a drop too much; but that be all along o' you, Miss, because ye weänt hev me; but, if ye would, I could put all that o' one side eäsy anew.

DORA.

Cannot you understand plain words, Mr. Dobson? I tell you, it cannot be.

DOBSON.

Eh, lass! Thy feyther eddicated his darters to marry gentlefoälk, and see what's coomed on it.

DORA.

That is enough, Farmer Dobson. You have shown me that, though fortune had born *you* into the estate of a gentleman, you would still have been Farmer Dobson. You had better attend to your hayfield. Good afternoon. [*Exit.*

DOBSON.

"Farmer Dobson"! Well, I be Farmer Dobson;

but I thinks Farmer Dobson's dog 'ud ha' knaw'd better nor to cast her sister's misfortin inter 'er teeth arter she'd been a-reädin' me the letter wi' 'er voice a-shaäkin', and the drop in 'er eye. Theer she goäs! Shall I foller 'er and ax 'er to maäke it up? Noä, not yet. Let 'er cool upon it; I likes 'er all the better fur taäkin' me down, like a laädy, as she be. Farmer Dobson! I be Farmer Dobson, sewer anew; but if iver I cooms upo' Gentleman Hedgar ageän, and doänt laäy my cartwhip athurt 'is shou'ders, why then I beänt Farmer Dobson, but summun else—blaäme't if I beänt!

Enter HAYMAKERS *with a load of hay.*

The last on it, eh?

1ST HAYMAKER.

Yeas.

DOBSON.

Hoäm wi' it, then. [*Exit surlily.*

1ST HAYMAKER.

Well, it be the last loäd hoäm.

2ND HAYMAKER.

Yeas, an' owd Dobson should be glad on it. What maäkes 'im allus sa glum?

SALLY ALLEN.

Glum! he be wus nor glum. He coom'd up to

me yisterdaäy i' the haäyfield, when meä and my sweet'art was a workin' along o' one side wi' one another, and he sent 'im awaäy to t'other end o' the field; and when I axed 'im why, he telled me 'at sweet'arts niver worked well togither; and I telled *'im* 'at sweet'arts allus worked best togither; and then he called me a rude naäme, and I can't abide 'im.

JAMES.

Why, lass, doänt tha knaw he be sweet upo' Dora Steer, and she weänt sa much as look at 'im? And wheniver 'e sees two sweet'arts togither like thou and me, Sally, he be fit to bust hissen wi' spites and jalousies.

SALLY.

Let 'im bust hissen, then, for owt *I* cares.

1ST HAYMAKER.

Well but, as I said afoor, it be the last loäd hoäm; do thou and thy sweet'art sing us hoäm to supper—"The Last Loäd Hoäm."

ALL.

Ay! "The Last Loäd Hoäm."

Song.

What did ye do, and what did ye saäy,
Wi' the wild white rose, an' the woodbine sa gaäy,

An' the midders all mow'd, an' the sky sa blue—
What did ye saäy, and what did ye do,
When ye thowt there were nawbody watchin' o' you,
And you an' your Sally was forkin' the haäy,
At the end of the daäy,
For the last loäd hoäm?

What did we do, and what did we saäy,
Wi' the briar sa green, an' the willer sa graäy,
An' the midders all mow'd, an' the sky sa blue—
Do ye think I be gawin' to tell it to you,
What we mowt saäy, and what we mowt do,
When me an' my Sally was forkin' the haäy,
At the end of the daäy,
For the last loäd hoäm?

But what did ye saäy, and what did ye do,
Wi' the butterflies out, and the swallers at plaäy,
An' the midders all mow'd, an' the sky sa blue?
Why, coom then, owd feller, I'll tell it to you;
For me an' my Sally we sweär'd to be true,
To be true to each other, let 'appen what maäy,
Till the end of the daäy
And the last loäd hoäm.

ALL.

Well sung!

JAMES.

Fanny be the naäme i' the song, but I swopt it fur *she.* [*Pointing to* SALLY.

SALLY.

Let ma aloän afoor foälk, wilt tha?

1ST HAYMAKER.

Ye shall sing that ageän to-night, fur owd Dobson 'll gi'e us a bit o' supper.

SALLY.

I weänt goä to owd Dobson; he wur rude to me i' tha haäyfield, and he'll be rude to me ageän to-night. Owd Steer's gotten all his grass down and wants a hand, and I'll goä to him.

1ST HAYMAKER.

Owd Steer gi'es nubbut cowd tea to *'is* men, and owd Dobson gi'es beer.

SALLY.

But I'd like owd Steer's cowd tea better nor Dobson's beer. Good-bye. [*Going.*

JAMES.

Gi'e us a buss fust, lass.

SALLY.

I tell'd tha to let ma aloän!

JAMES.

Why, wasn't thou and me a-bussin' o' one another t'other side o' the haäycock, when owd Dobson coom'd upo' us? I can't let tha aloän if I would, Sally. [*Offering to kiss her.*

SALLY.

Git along wi' ye, do! [*Exit.*

[*All laugh; exeunt singing.*

"To be true to each other, let 'appen what maäy,
Till the end o' the daäy
An' the last loäd hoäm."

Enter HAROLD.

HAROLD.

Not Harold! "Philip Edgar, Philip Edgar!"
Her phantom call'd me by the name she loved.
I told her I should hear her from the grave.
Ay! yonder is her casement. I remember
Her bright face beaming starlike down upon me
Thro' that rich cloud of blossom. Since I left her
Here weeping, I have ranged the world, and sat
Thro' every sensual course of that full feast
That leaves but emptiness.

Song.

"To be true to each other, let 'appen what maäy,
To the end o' the daäy
An' the last loäd hoäm."

HAROLD.

Poor Eva! O my God, if man be only
A willy-nilly current of sensations—
Reaction needs must follow revel—yet—
Why feel remorse, he, knowing that he *must* have
Moved in the iron grooves of Destiny?
Remorse then is a part of Destiny,
Nature a liar, making us feel guilty
Of her own faults.
My grandfather—of him
They say, that women—
O this mortal house,
Which we are born into, is haunted by
The ghosts of the dead passions of dead men;
And these take flesh again with our own flesh,
And bring us to confusion.
He was only
A poor philosopher who call'd the mind
Of children a blank page, a *tabula rasa*.
There, there, is written in invisible inks
"Lust, Prodigality, Covetousness, Craft,
Cowardice, Murder"—and the heat and fire
Of life will bring them out, and black enough,
So the child grow to manhood: better death
With our first wail than life—

Song (*further off*).

"Till the end o' the daäy
An' the last loäd hoäm,
Loäd hoäm."

This bridge again! (*Steps on the bridge.*)
How often have I stood
With Eva here! The brook among its flowers!
Forget-me-not, meadowsweet, willow-herb.
I had some smattering of science then,
Taught her the learned names, anatomized
The flowers for her—and now I only wish
This pool were deep enough, that I might plunge
And lose myself for ever.

Enter DAN SMITH (*singing*).

Gee oop! whoä! Gee oop! whoä!
Scizzars an' Pumpy was good uns to goä
Thruf slush an' squad
When roäds was bad,
But hallus ud stop at the Vine-an'-the-Hop,
Fur boäth on 'em knaw'd as well as mysen
That beer be as good fur 'erses as men.
Gee oop! whoä! Gee oop! whoä!
Scizzars an' Pumpy was good uns to goä.

The beer's gotten oop into my 'eäd. S'iver I mun git along back to the farm, fur she tell'd ma to taäke the cart to Littlechester.

Enter DORA.

Half an hour late! why are you loitering here?
Away with you at once. [*Exit* DAN SMITH.

(*Seeing* HAROLD *on bridge.*)

Some madman, is it,
Gesticulating there upon the bridge?
I am half afraid to pass.

HAROLD.

Sometimes I wonder,
When man has surely learnt at last that all
His old-world faith, the blossom of his youth,
Has faded, falling fruitless—whether then
All of us, all at once, may not be seized
With some fierce passion, not so much for Death
As against Life! all, all, into the dark—
No more!—and science now could drug and balm us
Back into nescience with as little pain
As it is to fall asleep.
This beggarly life,
This poor, flat, hedged-in field—no distance—this
Hollow Pandora-box,
With all the pleasures flown, not even Hope
Left at the bottom!
Superstitious fool,
What brought me here? To see her grave? her ghost?
Her ghost is everyway about me here.

DORA (*coming forward*).

Allow me, sir, to pass you.

HAROLD.

Eva!

DORA.

Eva!

HAROLD.

What are you? Where do you come from?

DORA.

From the farm

Here, close at hand.

HAROLD.

Are you—you are—that Dora,

The sister. I have heard of you. The likeness

Is very striking.

DORA.

You knew Eva, then?

HAROLD.

Yes—I was thinking of her when—O yes,

Many years back, and never since have met

Her equal for pure innocence of nature,

And loveliness of feature.

DORA.

No, nor I.

HAROLD.

Except, indeed, I have found it once again
In your own self.

DORA.

You flatter me. Dear Eva
Was always thought the prettier.

HAROLD.

And *her* charm
Of voice is also yours; and I was brooding
Upon a great unhappiness when you spoke.

DORA.

Indeed, you seem'd in trouble, sir.

HAROLD.

And you
Seem my good angel who may help me from it.

DORA (*aside*).

How worn he looks, poor man! who is it, I wonder.
How can I help him? (*Aloud.*) Might I ask your
name?

HAROLD.

Harold.

DORA.

I never heard her mention you.

HAROLD.

I met her first at a farm in Cumberland—
Her uncle's.

DORA.

She was there six years ago.

HAROLD.

And if she never mention'd me, perhaps
The painful circumstances which I heard—
I will not vex you by repeating them—
Only last week at Littlechester, drove me
From out her memory. She has disappear'd,
They told me, from the farm—and darker news.

DORA.

She has disappear'd, poor darling, from the world—
Left but one dreadful line to say, that we
Should find her in the river; and we dragg'd
The Littlechester river all in vain:
Have sorrow'd for her all these years in vain.
And my poor father, utterly broken down
By losing her—she was his favourite child—
Has let his farm, all his affairs, I fear,
But for the slender help that I can give,
Fall into ruin. Ah! that villain, Edgar,
If he should ever show his face among us,
Our men and boys would hoot him, stone him, hunt
him

With pitchforks off the farm, for all of them
Loved her, and she was worthy of all love.

HAROLD.

They say, we should forgive our enemies.

DORA.

Ay, if the wretch were dead I might forgive him;
We know not whether he be dead or living.

HAROLD.

What Edgar?

DORA.

Philip Edgar of Toft Hall
In Somerset. Perhaps you know him?

HAROLD.

Slightly.
(*Aside.*) Ay, for how slightly have I known myself.

DORA.

This Edgar, then, is living?

HAROLD.

Living? well—
One Philip Edgar of Toft Hall in Somerset
Is lately dead.

DORA.

Dead!—is there more than one?

HAROLD.

Nay—now—not one, (*aside*) for I am Philip Harold.

DORA.

That one, is he then—dead!

HAROLD.

(*Aside.*) My father's death,
Let her believe it mine; this, for the moment,
Will leave me a free field.

DORA.

Dead! and this world
Is brighter for his absence as that other
Is darker for his presence.

HAROLD.

Is not this
To speak too pitilessly of the dead?

DORA.

My five-years' anger cannot die at once,
Not all at once with death and him. I trust
I shall forgive him—by-and-by—not now.
O sir, you seem to have a heart; if you
Had seen us that wild morning when we found
Her bed unslept in, storm and shower lashing
Her casement, her poor spaniel wailing for her,
That desolate letter, blotted with her tears,
Which told us we should never see her more—
Our old nurse crying as if for her own child,
My father stricken with his first paralysis,

And then with blindness—had you been one of us
And seen all this, then you would know it is not
So easy to forgive—even the dead.

HAROLD.

But sure am I that of your gentleness
You will forgive him. She, you mourn for, seem'd
A miracle of gentleness—would not blur
A moth's wing by the touching; would not crush
The fly that drew her blood; and, were she living,
Would not—if penitent—have denied him *her*
Forgiveness. And perhaps the man himself,
When hearing of that piteous death, has suffer'd
More than we know. But wherefore waste your
heart
In looking on a chill and changeless Past?
Iron will fuse, and marble melt; the Past
Remains the Past. But you are young, and—
pardon me—
As lovely as your sister. Who can tell
What golden hours, with what full hands, may be
Waiting you in the distance? Might I call
Upon your father—I have seen the world—
And cheer his blindness with a traveller's tales?

DORA.

Call if you will, and when you will. I cannot
Well answer for my father; but if you

Can tell me anything of our sweet Eva
When in her brighter girlhood, I at least
Will bid you welcome, and will listen to you.
Now I must go.

HAROLD.

But give me first your hand:
I do not dare, like an old friend, to shake it.
I kiss it as a prelude to that privilege
When you shall know me better.

DORA.

(*Aside.*) How beautiful
His manners are, and how unlike the farmer's!
You are staying here?

HAROLD.

Yes, at the wayside inn
Close by that alder-island in your brook,
"The Angler's Home."

DORA.

Are *you* one?

HAROLD.

No, but I
Take some delight in sketching, and the country
Has many charms, altho' the inhabitants
Seem semi-barbarous.

DORA.

I am glad it pleases you;
Yet I, born here, not only love the country,
But its inhabitants too; and you, I doubt not,
Would take to them as kindly, if you cared
To live some time among them.

HAROLD.

If I did,
Then one at least of its inhabitants
Might have more charm for me than all the country.

DORA.

That one, then, should be grateful for your preference.

HAROLD.

I cannot tell, tho' standing in her presence.
(*Aside.*) She colours!

DORA.

Sir!

HAROLD.

Be not afraid of me,
For these are no conventional flourishes.
I do most earnestly assure you that
Your likeness—— [*Shouts and cries without.*

DORA.

What was that? my poor blind father—

Enter FARMING MAN.

FARMING MAN.

Miss Dora, Dan Smith's cart hes runned ower a laädy i' the holler laäne, and they ha' ta'en the body up inter your chaumber, and they be all a-callin' for ye.

DORA.

The body!—Heavens! I come!

HAROLD.

But you are trembling.
Allow me to go with you to the farm. [*Exeunt.*

Enter DOBSON.

DOBSON.

What feller wur it as 'a' been a-talkin' fur haäfe an hour wi' my Dora? (*Looking after him.*) Seeäms I ommost knaws the back on 'im—drest like a gentleman, too. Damn all gentlemen, says I! I should ha' thowt they'd hed anew of gentlefoälk, as I telled 'er to-daäy when she fell foul upo' me.

Minds ma o' summun. I could sweär to that; but that be all one, fur I haätes 'im afoor I knaws what 'e be. Theer! he turns round. Philip Hedgar o' Soomerset! Philip Hedgar o' Soomerset!—Noä—yeas—thaw the feller's gone and maäde such a litter of his faäce.

Eh lad, if it be thou, I'll Philip tha! a-plaäyin' the saäme gaäme wi' my Dora—I'll Soomerset tha.

I'd like to drag 'im thruff the herse-pond, and she to be a-lookin' at it. I'd like to leather 'im black and blue, and she to be a-laughin' at it. I'd like to fell 'im as deäd as a bullock! (*Clenching his fist.*)

But what 'ud she saäy to that? She telled me once not to meddle wi' 'im, and now she be fallen out wi' ma, and I can't coom at 'er.

It mun be *him*. Noä! Fur she'd niver 'a been talkin' haäfe an hour wi' the divil 'at killed her oän sister, or she beänt Dora Steer.

Yeas! Fur she niver knawed 'is faäce when 'e wur 'ere afoor; but I'll maäke 'er knaw! I'll maäke 'er knaw!

Enter HAROLD.

Naäy, but I mun git out on 'is waäy now, or I shall be the death on 'im. [*Exit.*

HAROLD.

How the clown glared at me! that Dobbins, is it,
With whom I used to jar? but can he trace me
Thro' five years' absence, and my change of name,
The tan of southern summers and the beard.
I may as well avoid him.

Ladylike!

Lilylike in her stateliness and sweetness!
How came she by it?—a daughter of the fields,
This Dora!
She gave her hand, unask'd, at the farm-gate;
I almost think she half-return'd the pressure
Of mine. What, I that held the orange blossom
Dark as the yew? but may not those, who march
Before their age, turn back at times, and make
Courtesy to custom? and now the stronger motive,
Misnamed free-will—the crowd would call it conscience—
Moves me — to what? I am dreaming; for the past
Look'd thro' the present, Eva's eyes thro' her's—
A spell upon me! Surely I loved Eva
More than I knew! or is it but the past
That brightens in retiring? Oh, last night,
Tired, pacing my new lands at Littlechester,
I dozed upon the bridge, and the black river
Flow'd thro' my dreams — if dreams they were.
She rose
From the foul flood and pointed toward the farm,
And her cry rang to me across the years,
"I call you, Philip Edgar, Philip Edgar!
Come, you will set all right again, and father
Will not die miserable." I could make his age
A comfort to him—so be more at peace

With mine own self. Some of my former friends
Would find my logic faulty; let them. Colour
Flows thro' my life again, and I have lighted
On a new pleasure. Anyhow we must
Move in the line of least resistance when
The stronger motive rules.

But she hates Edgar.

May not this Dobbins, or some other, spy
Edgar in Harold? Well then, I must make her
Love Harold first, and then she will forgive
Edgar for Harold's sake. She said herself
She would forgive him, by-and-by, not now—
For her own sake *then*, if not for mine—not now—
But by-and-by.

Enter DOBSON *behind.*

DOBSON.

By-and-by—eh, lad, dosta knaw this paäper? Ye dropt it upo' the roäd. "Philip Edgar, Esq." Ay, you be a pretty squire. I ha' fun' ye out, I hev. Eh, lad, dosta knaw what tha meäns wi' by-and-by? Fur if ye be goin' to sarve our Dora as ye sarved our Eva—then, by-and-by, if she weänt listen to me when I be a-tryin' to saäve 'er—if she weänt—look to thysen, for, by the Lord, I'd think na moor o' maäkin' an end o' tha nor a carrion craw—noä—thaw they hanged ma at 'Size fur it.

HAROLD.

Dobbins, I think!

DOBSON.

I beänt Dobbins.

HAROLD.

Nor am I Edgar, my good fellow.

DOBSON.

Tha lies! What hasta been saäyin' to *my* Dora?

HAROLD.

I have been telling her of the death of one Philip Edgar of Toft Hall, Somerset.

DOBSON.

Tha lies!

HAROLD (*pulling out a newspaper*).

Well, my man, it seems that you can read. Look there—under the deaths.

DOBSON.

"O' the 17th, Philip Edgar, o' Toft Hall, Soomerset." How coom thou to be sa like 'im, then?

HAROLD.

Naturally enough; for I am closely related to the dead man's family.

DOBSON.

An 'ow coom thou by the letter to 'im?

HAROLD.

Naturally again; for as I used to transact all his business for him, I had to look over his letters. Now then, see these (*takes out letters*). Half a score of them, all directed to me—Harold.

DOBSON.

'Arold! 'Arold! 'Arold, so they be.

HAROLD.

My name is Harold! Good day, Dobbins!

[*Exit.*

DOBSON.

'Arold! The feller's cleän daäzed, an' maäzed, an' maäted, an' muddled ma. Deäd! It mun be true, fur it wur i' print as black as owt. Naäy, but "Good daäy, Dobbins." Why, that wur the very twang on 'im. Eh, lad, but whether thou be Hedgar, or Hedgar's business man, thou hesn't naw business 'ere wi' *my* Dora, as I knaws on, an' whether thou calls thysen Hedgar or Harold, if thou stick to she I'll stick to thee—stick to tha like a weasel to a rabbit, I will. Ay! and I'd like to shoot tha like a rabbit an' all. "Good daäy, Dobbins." Dang tha!

ACT III.

SCENE.—*A room in* STEER'S *House. Door leading into bedroom at the back.*

DORA (*ringing a handbell*).

Milly!

Enter MILLY.

MILLY.

The little 'ymn? Yeäs, Miss; but I wur so ta'en up wi' leädin' the owd man about all the blessed murnin' 'at I ha' nobbut larned mysen haäfe on it.

"O man, forgive thy mortal foe,
Nor ever strike him blow for blow;
For all the souls on earth that live
To be forgiven must forgive.
Forgive him seventy times and seven:
For all the blessed souls in Heaven
Are both forgivers and forgiven."

But I'll git the book ageän, and larn mysen the rest, and saäy it to ye afoor dark; ye ringed fur that, Miss, didn't ye?

DORA.

No, Milly; but if the farming-men be come for their wages, to send them up to me.

MILLY.

Yeäs, Miss. [*Exit.*

DORA (*sitting at desk counting money*).

Enough at any rate for the present. (*Enter* FARMING MEN.) Good afternoon, my friends. I am sorry Mr. Steer still continues too unwell to attend to you, but the schoolmaster looked to the paying you your wages when I was away, didn't he?

MEN.

Yeäs; and thanks to ye.

DORA.

Some of our workmen have left us, but he sent me an alphabetical list of those that remain, so, Allen, I may as well begin with you.

ALLEN (*with his hand to his ear*).

Halfabitical! Taäke one o' the young ones fust, Miss, fur I be a bit deaf, and I wur hallus scaäred by a big word; leästwaäys, I should be wi' a lawyer.

DORA.

I spoke of your names, Allen, as they are arranged here (*shows book*)—according to their first letters.

ALLEN.

Letters! Yeas, I sees now. Them be what they

larns the childer' at school, but I were burn afoor schoolin-time.

DORA.

But, Allen, tho' you can't read, you could white-wash that cottage of yours where your grandson had the fever.

ALLEN.

I'll hev it done o' Monday.

DORA.

Else if the fever spread, the parish will have to thank you for it.

ALLEN.

Meä? why, it be the Lord's doin', noän o' mine; d'ye think *I'd* gi'e 'em the fever? But I thanks ye all the saäme, Miss. (*Takes money.*)

DORA (*calling out names*).

Higgins, Jackson, Luscombe, Nokes, Oldham, Skipworth! (*All take money.*) Did you find that you worked at all the worse upon the cold tea than you would have done upon the beer?

HIGGINS.

Noä, Miss; we worked naw wuss upo' the cowd tea; but we'd ha' worked better upo' the beer.

DORA.

Come, come, you worked well enough, and I

am much obliged to all of you. There's for you, and you, and you. Count the money and see if it's all right.

MEN.

All right, Miss; and thank ye kindly.

[*Exeunt* LUSCOMBE, NOKES, OLDHAM, SKIPWORTH.

DORA.

Dan Smith, my father and I forgave you stealing our coals. [DAN SMITH *advances to* DORA.

DAN SMITH (*bellowing*).

Whoy, O lor, Miss! that wur sa long back, and the walls sa thin, and the winders brokken, and the weather sa cowd, and my missus a-gittin' ower 'er lyin'-in.

DORA.

Didn't I say that we had forgiven you? But, Dan Smith, they tell me that you—and you have six children—spent all your last Saturday's wages at the ale-house; that you were stupid drunk all Sunday, and so ill in consequence all Monday, that you did not come into the hayfield. Why should I pay you your full wages?

DAN SMITH.

I be ready to taäke the pledge.

DORA.

And as ready to break it again. Besides it was you that were driving the cart—and I fear you were tipsy then, too—when you lamed the lady in the hollow lane.

DAN SMITH (*bellowing*).

O lor, Miss! noä, noä, noä! Ye sees the holler laäne be hallus sa dark i' the arternoon, and wheere the big eshtree cuts athurt it, it gi'es a turn like, and 'ow should I see to laäme the laädy, and meä coomin' along pretty sharp an' all?

DORA.

Well, there are your wages; the next time you waste them at a pothouse you get no more from me. (*Exit* DAN SMITH.) Sally Allen, you worked for Mr. Dobson, didn't you?

SALLY (*advancing*).

Yeäs, Miss; but he wur so rough wi' ma, I couldn't abide 'im.

DORA.

Why should he be rough with you? You are as good as a man in the hayfield. What's become of your brother?

SALLY.

'Listed for a soädger, Miss, i' the Queen's Real Hard Tillery.

DORA.

And your sweetheart—when are you and he to be married?

SALLY.

At Michaelmas, Miss, please God.

DORA.

You are an honest pair. I will come to your wedding.

SALLY.

An' I thanks ye fur that, Miss, moor nor fur the waäge.

(*Going—returns.*)

'A cotched ma about the waaist, Miss, when 'e wur 'ere afoor, an' axed ma to be 'is little sweet-art, an soä I knaw'd 'im when I seed 'im ageän an I telled feyther on 'im.

DORA.

What is all this, Allen?

ALLEN.

Why, Miss Dora, meä and my maätes, us three, we wants to hev three words wi' ye.

HIGGINS.

That be 'im, and meä, Miss.

JACKSON.

An' meä, Miss.

ALLEN.

An' we weänt mention naw naämes, we'd as lief talk o' the Divil afoor ye as 'im, fur they says the master goäs cleän off his 'eäd when he 'eärs the naäme on 'im; but us three, arter Sally'd telled us on 'im, we fun' 'im out a-walkin' i' West Field wi' a white 'at, nine o'clock, upo' Tuesday murnin', and all on us, wi' your leave, we wants to leather 'im.

DORA.

Who?

ALLEN.

Him as did the mischief here, five year' sin'.

DORA.

Mr. Edgar?

ALLEN.

Theer, Miss! You ha' naämed 'im—not me.

DORA.

He's dead, man—dead; gone to his account—dead and buried.

ALLEN.

I beänt sa sewer o' that, fur Sally knaw'd 'im; Now then?

DORA.

Yes; it was in the Somersetshire papers.

ALLEN.

Then yon mun be his brother, an' we'll leather *'im.*

DORA.

I never heard that he had a brother. Some foolish mistake of Sally's; but what! would you beat a man for his brother's fault? That were a wild justice indeed. Let bygones be bygones. Go home! Good-night! (*All exeunt.*) I have once more paid them all. The work of the farm will go on still, but for how long? We are almost at the bottom of the well: little more to be drawn from it—and what then? Encumbered as we are, who would lend us anything? We shall have to sell all the land, which Father, for a whole life, has been getting together, again, and that, I am sure, would be the death of him. What am I to do? Farmer Dobson, were I to marry him, has promised to keep our heads above water; and the man has doubtless a good heart, and a true and lasting love for me: yet—though I can be sorry for him—as the good Sally says, "I can't abide him"—almost brutal, and matched with my Harold is like a hedge thistle by a garden rose. But then, he, too—will he ever be of one faith with his wife? which is my dream of a true marriage. Can I fancy him kneeling with me, and uttering the same prayer; standing up side by side with me, and

singing the same hymn? I fear not. Have I done wisely, then, in accepting him? But may not a girl's love-dream have too much romance in it to be realised all at once, or altogether, or anywhere but in Heaven? And yet I had once a vision of a pure and perfect marriage, where the man and the woman, only differing as the stronger and the weaker, should walk hand in hand together down this valley of tears, as they call it so truly, to the grave at the bottom, and lie down there together in the darkness which would seem but for a moment, to be wakened again together by the light of the resurrection, and no more partings for ever and for ever. (*Walks up and down. She sings.*)

"O happy lark, that warblest high
Above thy lowly nest,
O brook, that brawlest merrily by
Thro' fields that once were blest,
O tower spiring to the sky,
O graves in daisies drest,
O Love and Life, how weary am I,
And how I long for rest."

There, there, I am a fool! Tears! I have sometimes been moved to tears by a chapter of fine writing in a novel; but what have I to do with tears now? All depends on me—Father, this poor girl, the farm,

everything; and they both love me—I am all in all to both; and he loves me too, I am quite sure of that. Courage, courage! and all will go well. (*Goes to bedroom door; opens it.*) How dark your room is! Let me bring you in here where there is still full daylight. (*Brings* EVA *forward.*) Why, you look better.

EVA.

And I feel so much better that I trust I may be able by-and-by to help you in the business of the farm; but I must not be known yet. Has anyone found me out, Dora?

DORA.

Oh, no; you kept your veil too close for that when they carried you in; since then, no one has seen you but myself.

EVA.

Yes—this Milly.

DORA.

Poor blind Father's little guide, Milly, who came to us three years after you were gone, how should she know you? But now that you have been brought to us as it were from the grave, dearest Eva, and have been here so long, will you not speak with Father to-day?

EVA.

Do you think that I may? No, not yet. I am not equal to it yet.

DORA.

Why? Do you still suffer from your fall in the hollow lane?

EVA.

Bruised; but no bones broken.

DORA.

I have always told Father that the huge old ash-tree there would cause an accident some day; but he would never cut it down, because one of the Steers had planted it there in former times.

EVA.

If it had killed one of the Steers there the other day, it might have been better for her, for him, and for you.

DORA.

Come, come, keep a good heart! Better for me! That's good. How better for me?

EVA.

You tell me you have a lover. Will he not fly from you if he learn the story of my shame and that I am still living?

DORA.

No; I am sure that when we are married he

will be willing that you and Father should live with us; for, indeed, he tells me that he met you once in the old times, and was much taken with you, my dear.

EVA.

Taken with me; who was he? Have you told him I am here?

DORA.

No; do you wish it?

EVA.

See, Dora; you yourself are ashamed of me (*weeps*), and I do not wonder at it.

DORA.

But I should wonder at myself if it were so. Have we not been all in all to one another from the time when we first peeped into the bird's nest, waded in the brook, ran after the butterflies, and prattled to each other that we would marry fine gentlemen, and played at being fine ladies?

EVA.

That last was my Father's fault, poor man. And this lover of yours—this Mr. Harold—is a gentleman?

DORA.

That he is, from head to foot. I do believe I

lost my heart to him the very first time we met, and I love him so much——

EVA.

Poor Dora!

DORA.

That I dare not tell him how much I love him.

EVA.

Better not. Has he offered you marriage, this gentleman?

DORA.

Could I love him else?

EVA.

And are you quite sure that after marriage this gentleman will not be shamed of his poor farmer's daughter among the ladies in his drawing-room?

DORA.

Shamed of me in a drawing-room! Wasn't Miss Vavasour, our schoolmistress at Littlechester, a lady born? Were not our fellow-pupils all ladies? Wasn't dear mother herself at least by one side a lady? Can't I speak like a lady; pen a letter like a lady; talk a little French like a lady; play a little like a lady? Can't a girl when she loves her husband, and he her, make herself anything he wishes her to be? Shamed of me in a drawing-room, in-

deed! See here! "I hope your Lordship is quite recovered of your gout?" (*Curtsies.*) "Will your Ladyship ride to cover to-day? (*Curtsies.*) I can recommend our Voltigeur." "I am sorry that we could not attend your Grace's party on the 10th!" (*Curtsies.*) There, I am glad my nonsense has made you smile!

EVA.

I have heard that "your Lordship," and your "Ladyship," and "your Grace" are all growing old-fashioned!

DORA.

But the love of sister for sister can never be old-fashioned. I have been unwilling to trouble you with questions, but you seem somewhat better to-day. We found a letter in your bedroom torn into bits. I couldn't make it out. What was it?

EVA.

From him! from him! He said we had been most happy together, and he trusted that some time we should meet again, for he had not forgotten his promise to come when I called him. But that was a mockery, you know, for he gave me no address, and there was no word of marriage; and, O Dora, he signed himself "Yours gratefully"—fancy, Dora, "gratefully"! "Yours gratefully"!

DORA.

Infamous wretch! (*Aside.*) Shall I tell her he is dead? No; she is still too feeble.

EVA.

Hark! Dora, some one is coming. I cannot and I will not see anybody.

DORA.

It is only Milly.

Enter MILLY, *with basket of roses.*

DORA.

Well, Milly, why do you come in so roughly? The sick lady here might have been asleep.

MILLY.

Pleäse, Miss, Mr. Dobson telled me to saäy he's browt some of Miss Eva's roses for the sick laädy to smell on.

DORA.

Take them, dear. Say that the sick lady thanks him! Is he here?

MILLY.

Yeäs, Miss; and he wants to speak to ye partic'lar.

DORA.

Tell him I cannot leave the sick lady just yet.

MILLY.

Yeäs, Miss; but he says he wants to tell ye summut very partic'lar.

DORA.

Not to-day. What are you staying for?

MILLY.

Why, Miss, I be afeard I shall set him a-sweäring like onythink.

DORA.

And what harm will that do you, so that you do not copy his bad manners? Go, child. (*Exit* MILLY.) But, Eva, why did you write "Seek me at the bottom of the river"?

EVA.

Why? because I meant it!—that dreadful night! that lonely walk to Littlechester, the rain beating in my face all the way, dead midnight when I came upon the bridge; the river, black, slimy, swirling under me in the lamplight, by the rotten wharfs—but I was so mad, that I mounted upon the parapet——

DORA.

You make me shudder!

EVA.

To fling myself over, when I heard a voice,

"Girl, what are you doing there?" It was a Sister of Mercy, come from the death-bed of a pauper, who had died in his misery blessing God, and the Sister took me to her house, and bit by bit—for she promised secrecy—I told her all.

DORA.

And what then?

EVA.

She would have persuaded me to come back here, but I couldn't. Then she got me a place as nursery governess, and when the children grew too old for me, and I asked her once more to help me, once more she said, "Go home;" but I hadn't the heart or face to do it. And then—what would Father say? I sank so low that I went into service—the drudge of a lodging-house—and when the mistress died, and I appealed to the Sister again, her answer—I think I have it about me—yes, there it is!

DORA (*reads*).

"My dear Child,—I can do no more for you. I have done wrong in keeping your secret; your Father must be now in extreme old age. Go back to him and ask his forgiveness before he dies.—SISTER AGATHA." Sister Agatha is right. Don't you long for Father's forgiveness?

EVA.

I would almost die to have it!

DORA.

And he may die before he gives it; may drop off any day, any hour. You must see him at once. (*Rings bell. Enter* MILLY.) Milly, my dear, how did you leave Mr. Steer?

MILLY.

He's been a-moänin' and a-groänin' in 'is sleep, but I thinks he be wakkenin' oop.

DORA.

Tell him that I and the lady here wish to see him. You see she is lamed, and cannot go down to him.

MILLY.

Yeäs, Miss, I will. [*Exit* MILLY.

DORA.

I ought to prepare you. You must not expect to find our Father as he was five years ago. He is much altered; but I trust that your return—for you know, my dear, you were always his favourite—will give him, as they say, a new lease of life.

EVA (*clinging to* DORA).

Oh, Dora, Dora!

Enter STEER, *led by* MILLY.

STEER.

Hes the cow cawved?

DORA.

No, Father.

STEER.

Be the colt deäd?

DORA.

No, Father.

STEER.

He wur sa bellows'd out wi' the wind this murnin', 'at I tell'd 'em to gallop 'im. Be he deäd?

DORA.

Not that I know.

STEER.

What hasta sent fur me, then, fur?

DORA (*taking* STEER'S *arm*).

Well, Father, I have a surprise for you.

STEER.

I ha niver been surprised but once i' my life, and I went blind upon it.

DORA.

Eva has come home.

STEER.

Hoäm? fro' the bottom o' the river?

DORA.

No, Father, that was a mistake. She's here again.

STEER.

The Steers was all gentlefoälks i' the owd times, an' I worked early an' laäte to maäke 'em all gentlefoälks ageän. The land belonged to the Steers i' the owd times, an' it belongs to the Steers ageän: I bowt it back ageän; but I couldn't buy my darter back ageän when she lost hersen, could I? I eddicated boäth on em to marry gentlemen, an' one on 'em went an' lost hersen i' the river.

DORA.

No, father, she's here.

STEER.

Here! she moänt coom here. What would her mother saäy? If it be her ghoäst, we mun abide it. We can't keep a ghoäst out.

EVA (*falling at his feet*).

O forgive me! forgive me!

STEER.

Who said that? Taäke me awaäy, little gell. It be one o' my bad daäys.

[*Exit* STEER *led by* MILLY.

DORA (*smoothing* EVA'S *forehead*).

Be not so cast down, my sweet Eva. You heard

him say it was one of his bad days. He will be sure to know you to-morrow.

EVA.

It is almost the last of my bad days, I think. I am very faint. I must lie down. Give me your arm. Lead me back again.

[DORA *takes* EVA *into inner room.*

Enter MILLY.

MILLY.

Miss Dora! Miss Dora!

DORA (*returning and leaving the bedroom door ajar*).

Quiet! quiet! What is it?

MILLY.

Mr. 'Arold, Miss.

DORA.

Below?

MILLY.

Yeäs, Miss. He be saäyin' a word to the owd man, but he'll coom up if ye lets 'im.

DORA.

Tell him, then, that I'm waiting for him.

MILLY.

Yeäs, Miss.

[*Exit.* DORA *sits pensively and waits.*

Enter HAROLD.

HAROLD.

You are pale, my Dora! but the ruddiest cheek
That ever charm'd the plowman of your wolds
Might wish its rose a lily, could it look
But half as lovely. I was speaking with
Your father, asking his consent—you wish'd me—
That we should marry: he would answer nothing,
I could make nothing of him; but, my flower,
You look so weary and so worn! What is it
Has put you out of heart?

DORA.

It puts me in heart
Again to see you; but indeed the state
Of my poor father puts me out of heart.
Is yours yet living?

HAROLD.

No—I told you.

DORA.

When?

HAROLD.

Confusion!—Ah well, well! the state we all
Must come to in our spring-and-winter world
If we live long enough! and poor Steer looks
The very type of Age in a picture, bow'd

To the earth he came from, to the grave he goes to,
Beneath the burthen of years.

DORA.

More like the picture
Of Christian in my "Pilgrim's Progress" here,
Bow'd to the dust beneath the burthen of sin.

HAROLD.

Sin! What sin?

DORA.

Not his own.

HAROLD.

That nursery-tale
Still read, then?

DORA.

Yes; our carters and our shepherds
Still find a comfort there.

HAROLD.

Carters and shepherds!

DORA.

Scorn! I hate scorn. A soul with no religion—
My mother used to say that such a one
Was without rudder, anchor, compass—might be
Blown everyway with every gust and wreck
On any rock; and tho' you are good and gentle,
Yet if thro' any want——

HAROLD.

Of this religion?
Child, read a little history, you will find
The common brotherhood of man has been
Wrong'd by the cruelties of his religions
More than could ever have happen'd thro' the want
Of any or all of them.

DORA.

—But, O dear friend,
If thro' the want of any—I mean the true one—
And pardon me for saying it—you should ever
Be tempted into doing what might seem
Not altogether worthy of you, I think
That I should break my heart, for you have taught
me
To love you.

HAROLD.

What is this? some one been stirring
Against me? he, your rustic amourist,
The polish'd Damon of your pastoral here,
This Dobson of your idyll?

DORA.

No, Sir, no!
Did you not tell me he was crazed with jealousy.
Had threaten'd ev'n your life, and would say any-
thing?

Did *I* not promise not to listen to him,
Not ev'n to see the man?

HAROLD.

Good; then what is it
That makes you talk so dolefully?

DORA.

I told you—
My father. Well, indeed, a friend just now,
One that has been much wrong'd, whose griefs are mine,
Was warning me that if a gentleman
Should wed a farmer's daughter, he would be
Sooner or later shamed of her among
The ladies, born his equals.

HAROLD.

More fool he!
What I that have been call'd a Socialist,
A Communist, a Nihilist—what you will!——

DORA.

What are all these?

HAROLD.

Utopian idiotcies.
They did not last three Junes. Such rampant weeds
Strangle each other, die, and make the soil

For Cæsars, Cromwells, and Napoleons
To root their power in. I have freed myself
From all such dreams, and some will say because
I have inherited my Uncle. Let them.
But—shamed of you, my Empress! I should prize
The pearl of Beauty, even if I found it
Dark with the soot of slums.

DORA.

But I can tell you,
We Steers are of old blood, tho we be fallen.
See there our shield. (*Pointing to arms on mantel-piece.*) For I have heard the Steers
Had land in Saxon times; and your own name
Of Harold sounds so English and so old
I am sure you must be proud of it.

HAROLD.

Not I!
As yet I scarcely feel it mine. I took it
For some three thousand acres. I have land now
And wealth, and lay both at your feet.

DORA.

And *what* was
Your name before?

HAROLD.

Come, come, my girl, enough

Of this strange talk. I love you and you me.
True, I have held opinions, hold some still,
Which you would scarce approve of: for all that,
I am a man not prone to jealousies,
Caprices, humours, moods; but very ready
To make allowances, and mighty slow
To feel offences. Nay, I do believe
I could forgive—well, almost anything—
And that more freely than your formal priest,
Because I know more fully than *he* can
What poor earthworms are all and each of us,
Here crawling in this boundless Nature. Dora,
If marriage ever brought a woman happiness
I doubt not I can make you happy.

DORA.

You make me
Happy already.

HAROLD.

And I never said
As much before to any woman living.

DORA.

No?

HAROLD.

No! by this true kiss, *you* are the first
I ever have loved truly. [*They kiss each other.*

EVA (*with a wild cry.*)

Philip Edgar!

HAROLD.

The phantom cry! *You*—did *you* hear a cry?

DORA.

She must be crying out "Edgar" in her sleep.

HAROLD.

Who must be crying out "Edgar" in her sleep?

DORA.

Your pardon for a minute. She must be waked.

HAROLD.

Who must be waked?

DORA.

I am not deaf: you fright me.

What ails you?

HAROLD.

Speak.

DORA.

You know her, Eva.

HAROLD.

Eva!

[EVA *opens the door and stands in the entry.*

She!

EVA.

Make her happy, then, and I forgive you.

[*Falls dead.*

DORA.

Happy! What? Edgar? Is it so? Can it be?
They told me so. Yes, yes! I see it all now.
O she has fainted. Sister, Eva, sister!
He is yours again—he will love *you* again;
I give him back to you again. Look up!
One word, or do but smile! Sweet, do you hear me?

[*Puts her hand on* EVA'S *heart.*

There, there—the heart, O God!—the poor young
heart
Broken at last—all still—and nothing left
To live for. [*Falls on body of her sister.*

HAROLD.

Living . . . dead . . . She said "all still.
Nothing to live for."
She—she knows me—now . . .
(*A pause.*)
She knew me from the first, she juggled with me,
She hid this sister, told me she was dead—
I have wasted pity on her—not dead now—
No! acting, playing on me, both of them.
They drag the river for her! no, not they!
Playing on me—not dead now—a swoon—a scene—
Yet—how she made her wail as for the dead!

Enter MILLY.

MILLY.

Pleäse, Mister 'Arold

HAROLD (*roughly*).

Well?

MILLY.

The owd man's coom'd ageän to 'issen, an' wants
To hev a word wi' ye about the marriage.

HAROLD.

The what?

MILLY.

The marriage.

HAROLD.

The marriage?

MILLY.

Yeäs, the marriage.
Granny says marriages be maäde i' 'eaven.

HAROLD.

She lies! They are made in Hell. Child, can't
you see?
Tell them to fly for a doctor.

MILLY.

O law—yeäs, Sir!
I'll run fur im mysen. [*Exit.*

HAROLD.

All silent there,
Yes, deathlike! Dead? I dare not look: if dead,
Were it best to steal away, to spare myself,
And her too, pain, pain, pain?
My curse on all
This world of mud, on all its idiot gleams
Of pleasure, all the foul fatalities
That blast our natural passions into pains!

Enter DOBSON.

DOBSON.

You, Master Hedgar, Harold, or whativer
They calls ye, for I warrants that ye goäs
By haäfe a scoor o' naämes—out o' the chaumber.
[*Dragging him past the body.*

HAROLD.

Not that way, man! Curse on your brutal strength!
I cannot pass that way.

DOBSON.

Out o' the chaumber!
I'll mash tha into nowt.

HAROLD.

The mere wild-beast!

DOBSON.

Out o' the chaumber, dang tha!

HAROLD.

Lout, churl, clown!

[*While they are shouting and struggling* DORA *rises and comes between them.*

DORA (*to* DOBSON).

Peace, let him be: it is the chamber of Death!
Sir, you are tenfold more a gentleman,
A hundred times more worth a woman's love,
Than this, this—but I waste no words upon him:
His wickedness is like my wretchedness—
Beyond all language.

(*To* HAROLD.)

You—you see her there!
Only fifteen when first you came on her,
And then the sweetest flower of all the wolds,
So lovely in the promise of her May,
So winsome in her grace and gaiety,
So loved by all the village people here,
So happy in herself and in her home——

DOBSON (*agitated*).

Theer, theer! ha' done. I can't abeär to see her.

[*Exit.*

DORA.

A child, and all as trustful as a child!
Five years of shame and suffering broke the heart

That only beat for you; and he, the father,
Thro' that dishonour which you brought upon us,
Has lost his health, his eyesight, even his mind.

HAROLD (*covering his face*).

Enough!

DORA.

It seem'd so; only there was left
A second daughter, and to her you came
Veiling one sin to act another.

HAROLD.

No!
You wrong me there! hear, hear me! I wish'd, if
you—— [*Pauses.*

DORA.

If I——

HAROLD.

Could love me, could be brought to love me
As I loved you—

DORA.

What then?

HAROLD.

I wish'd, I hoped
To make, to make——

DORA.

What did you hope to make?

HAROLD.

'Twere best to make an end of my lost life.
O Dora, Dora!

DORA.

What did you hope to make?

HAROLD.

Make, make! I cannot find the word—forgive it—
Amends.

DORA.

For what? to whom?

HAROLD.

To him, to you!
[*Falling at her feet.*

DORA.

To *him!* to *me!*
No, not with all your wealth,
Your land, your life! Out in the fiercest storm
That ever made earth tremble—he, nor I—
The shelter of *your* roof—not for one moment—
Nothing from *you!*
Sunk in the deepest pit of pauperism,
Push'd from all doors as if we bore the plague,
Smitten with fever in the open field,
Laid famine-stricken at the gates of Death—

Nothing from you!

But she there—her last word
Forgave—and I forgive you. If you ever
Forgive yourself, you are even lower and baser
Than even I can well believe you. Go!

[*He lies at her feet. Curtain falls.*

TIRESIAS

AND OTHER POEMS.

TO MY GOOD FRIEND

ROBERT BROWNING,

WHOSE GENIUS AND GENIALITY

WILL BEST APPRECIATE WHAT MAY BE BEST,

AND MAKE MOST ALLOWANCE FOR WHAT MAY BE WORST,

THIS VOLUME

IS

AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.

TO E. FITZGERALD.

Old Fitz, who from your suburb grange,
Where once I tarried for a while,
Glance at the wheeling Orb of change,
And greet it with a kindly smile;
Whom yet I see as there you sit
Beneath your sheltering garden-tree,
And watch your doves about you flit,
And plant on shoulder, hand and knee,
Or on your head their rosy feet,
As if they knew your diet spares
Whatever moved in that full sheet
Let down to Peter at his prayers;
Who live on milk and meal and grass;
And once for ten long weeks I tried
Your table of Pythagoras,
And seem'd at first "a thing enskied"
(As Shakespeare has it) airy-light
To float about the ways of men,
Then fell from that half-spiritual height
Chill'd, till I tasted flesh again

One night when earth was winter-black,
And all the heavens flash'd in frost;
And on me, half-asleep, came back
That wholesome heat the blood had lost,
And set me climbing icy capes
And glaciers, over which there roll'd
To meet me long-arm'd vines with grapes
Of Eshcol hugeness; for the cold
Without, and warmth within me, wrought
To mould the dream; but none can say
That Lenten fare makes Lenten thought,
Who reads your golden Eastern lay,
Than which I know no version done
In English more divinely well;
A planet equal to the sun
Which cast it, that large infidel
Your Omar; and your Omar drew
Full-handed plaudits from our best
In modern letters, and from two,
Old friends outvaluing all the rest,
Two voices heard on earth no more;
But we old friends are still alive,
And I am nearing seventy-four,
While you have touch'd at seventy-five,
And so I send a birthday line
Of greeting; and my son, who dipt
In some forgotten book of mine

With sallow scraps of manuscript,
And dating many a year ago,
Has hit on this, which you will take
My Fitz, and welcome, as I know
Less for its own than for the sake
Of one recalling gracious times,
When, in our younger London days,
You found some merit in my rhymes,
And I more pleasure in your praise.

TIRESIAS.

I WISH I were as in the years of old,
While yet the blessed daylight made itself
Ruddy thro' both the roofs of sight, and woke
These eyes, now dull, but then so keen to seek
The meanings ambush'd under all they saw,
The flight of birds, the flame of sacrifice,
What omens may foreshadow fate to man
And woman, and the secret of the Gods.
  My son, the Gods, despite of human prayer,
Are slower to forgive than human kings.
The great God, Arês, burns in anger still
Against the guiltless heirs of him from Tyre,
Our Cadmus, out of whom thou art, who found
Beside the springs of Dircê, smote, and still'd
Thro' all its folds the multitudinous beast,
The dragon, which our trembling fathers call'd
The God's own son.
                A tale, that told to me,
When but thine age, by age as winter-white
As mine is now, amazed, but made me yearn

For larger glimpses of that more than man
Which rolls the heavens, and lifts, and lays the deep,
Yet loves and hates with mortal hates and loves,
And moves unseen among the ways of men.
Then, in my wanderings all the lands that lie
Subjected to the Heliconian ridge
Have heard this footstep fall, altho' my wont
Was more to scale the highest of the heights
With some strange hope to see the nearer God.
One naked peak—the sister of the sun
Would climb from out the dark, and linger there
To silver all the valleys with her shafts—
There once, but long ago, five-fold thy term
Of years, I lay; the winds were dead for heat;
The noonday crag made the hand burn; and sick
For shadow—not one bush was near—I rose
Following a torrent till its myriad falls
Found silence in the hollows underneath.
There in a secret olive-glade I saw
Pallas Athene climbing from the bath
In anger; yet one glittering foot disturb'd
The lucid well; one snowy knee was prest
Against the margin flowers; a dreadful light
Came from her golden hair, her golden helm
And all her golden armour on the grass,
And from her virgin breast, and virgin eyes
Remaining fixt on mine, till mine grew dark

For ever, and I heard a voice that said
"Henceforth be blind, for thou hast seen too much,
And speak the truth that no man may believe."
Son, in the hidden world of sight, that lives
Behind this darkness, I behold her still,
Beyond all work of those who carve the stone,
Beyond all dreams of Godlike womanhood,
Ineffable beauty, out of whom, at a glance,
And as it were, perforce, upon me flash'd
The power of prophesying—but to me
No power—so chain'd and coupled with the curse
Of blindness and their unbelief, who heard
And heard not, when I spake of famine, plague,
Shrine-shattering earthquake, fire, flood, thunder-bolt,
And angers of the Gods for evil done
And expiation lack'd—no power on Fate,
Theirs, or mine own! for when the crowd would roar
For blood, for war, whose issue was their doom,
To cast wise words among the multitude
Was flinging fruit to lions; nor, in hours
Of civil outbreak, when I knew the twain
Would each waste each, and bring on both the yoke
Of stronger states, was mine the voice to curb
The madness of our cities and their kings.
Who ever turn'd upon his heel to hear
My warning that the tyranny of one

Was prelude to the tyranny of all?
My counsel that the tyranny of all
Led backward to the tyranny of one?
This power hath work'd no good to aught that lives,
And these blind hands were useless in their wars.
O therefore that the unfulfill'd desire,
The grief for ever born from griefs to be,
The boundless yearning of the Prophet's heart—
Could *that* stand forth, and like a statue, rear'd
To some great citizen, win all praise from all
Who past it, saying, "That was he!"
In vain!
Virtue must shape itself in deed, and those
Whom weakness or necessity have cramp'd
Within themselves, immerging, each, his urn
In his own well, draw solace as he may.
Menaceus, thou hast eyes, and I can hear
Too plainly what full tides of onset sap
Our seven high gates, and what a weight of war
Rides on those ringing axles! jingle of bits,
Shouts, arrows, tramp of the hornfooted horse
That grind the glebe to powder! Stony showers
Of that ear-stunning hail of Arês crash
Along the sounding walls. Above, below,
Shock after shock, the song-built towers and gates
Reel, bruised and butted with the shuddering

War-thunder of iron rams; and from within
The city comes a murmur void of joy,
Lest she be taken captive—maidens, wives,
And mothers with their babblers of the dawn,
And oldest age in shadow from the night,
Falling about their shrines before their Gods,
And wailing "Save us."

And they wail to thee!
These eyeless eyes, that cannot see thine own,
See this, that only in thy virtue lies
The saving of our Thebes; for, yesternight,
To me, the great God Arês, whose one bliss
Is war, and human sacrifice—himself
Blood-red from battle, spear and helmet tipt
With stormy light as on a mast at sea,
Stood out before a darkness, crying "Thebes,
Thy Thebes shall fall and perish, for I loathe
The seed of Cadmus—yet if one of these
By his own hand—if one of these——"

My son,
No sound is breathed so potent to coerce,
And to conciliate, as their names who dare
For that sweet mother land which gave them birth
Nobly to do, nobly to die. Their names,
Graven on memorial columns, are a song
Heard in the future; few, but more than wall
And rampart, their examples reach a hand

Far thro' all years, and everywhere they meet
And kindle generous purpose, and the strength
To mould it into action pure as theirs.
  Fairer thy fate than mine, if life's best end
Be to end well! and thou refusing this,
Unvenerable will thy memory be
While men shall move the lips: but if thou dare—
Thou, one of these, the race of Cadmus—then
No stone is fitted in yon marble girth
Whose echo shall not tongue thy glorious doom,
Nor in this pavement but shall ring thy name
To every hoof that clangs it, and the springs
Of Dircê laving yonder battle-plain,
Heard from the roofs by night, will murmur thee
To thine own Thebes, while Thebes thro' thee shall
    stand
Firm-based with all her Gods.
                The Dragon's cave
Half hid, they tell me, now in flowing vines—
Where once he dwelt and whence he roll'd himself
At dead of night—thou knowest, and that smooth
    rock
Before it, altar-fashion'd, where of late
The woman-breasted Sphinx, with wings drawn back,
Folded her lion paws, and look'd to Thebes.
There blanch the bones of whom she slew, and
    these

Mixt with her own, because the fierce beast found
A wiser than herself, and dash'd herself
Dead in her rage: but thou art wise enough,
Tho' young, to love thy wiser, blunt the curse
Of Pallas, hear, and tho' I speak the truth
Believe I speak it, let thine own hand strike
Thy youthful pulses into rest and quench
The red God's anger, fearing not to plunge
Thy torch of life in darkness, rather—thou
Rejoicing that the sun, the moon, the stars
Send no such light upon the ways of men
As one great deed.

Thither, my son, and there
Thou, that hast never known the embrace of love,
Offer thy maiden life.

This useless hand!
I felt one warm tear fall upon it. Gone!
He will achieve his greatness.

But for me,
I would that I were gather'd to my rest,
And mingled with the famous kings of old,
On whom about their ocean-islands flash
The faces of the Gods—the wise man's word,
Here trampled by the populace underfoot,
There crown'd with worship—and these eyes will find
The men I knew, and watch the chariot whirl

About the goal again, and hunters race
The shadowy lion, and the warrior-kings,
In height and prowess more than human, strive
Again for glory, while the golden lyre
Is ever sounding in heroic ears
Heroic hymns, and every way the vales
Wind, clouded with the grateful incense-fume
Of those who mix all odour to the Gods
On one far height in one far-shining fire.

"One height and one far-shining fire"
And while I fancied that my friend
For this brief idyll would require
A less diffuse and opulent end,
And would defend his judgment well,
If I should deem it over nice—
The tolling of his funeral bell
Broke on my Pagan Paradise,
And mixt the dream of classic times,
And all the phantoms of the dream,
With present grief, and made the rhymes,
That miss'd his living welcome, seem
Like would-be guests an hour too late,
Who down the highway moving on
With easy laughter find the gate
Is bolted, and the master gone.

Gone into darkness, that full light
Of friendship! past, in sleep, away
By night, into the deeper night!
The deeper night? A clearer day
Than our poor twilight dawn on earth—
If night, what barren toil to be!
What life, so maim'd by night, were worth
Our living out? Not mine to me
Remembering all the golden hours
Now silent, and so many dead,
And him the last; and laying flowers,
This wreath, above his honour'd head,
And praying that, when I from hence
Shall fade with him into the unknown,
My close of earth's experience
May prove as peaceful as his own.

THE WRECK.

I.

HIDE me, Mother! my Fathers belong'd to the church of old,
I am driven by storm and sin and death to the ancient fold,
I cling to the Catholic Cross once more, to the Faith that saves,
My brain is full of the crash of wrecks, and the roar of waves,
My life itself is a wreck, I have sullied a noble name,
I am flung from the rushing tide of the world as a waif of shame,
I am roused by the wail of a child, and awake to a livid light,
And a ghastlier face than ever has haunted a grave by night,
I would hide from the storm without, I would flee from the storm within,
I would make my life one prayer for a soul that died in his sin,

I was the tempter, Mother, and mine was the
deeper fall;
I will sit at your feet, I will hide my face, I will
tell you all.

II.

He that they gave me to, Mother, a heedless and
innocent bride—
I never have wrong'd his heart, I have only wounded
his pride—
Spain in his blood and the Jew——dark-visaged,
stately and tall—
A princelier-looking man never stept thro' a Prince's
hall.
And who, when his anger was kindled, would ven-
ture to give him the nay?
And a man men fear is a man to be loved by the
women they say.
And I could have loved him too, if the blossom can
doat on the blight,
Or the young green leaf rejoice in the frost that
sears it at night;
He would open the books that I prized, and toss
them away with a yawn,
Repell'd by the magnet of Art to the which my
nature was drawn,
The word of the Poet by whom the deeps of the
world are stirr'd,

The music that robes it in language beneath and
beyond the word!
My Shelley would fall from my hands when he cast
a contemptuous glance
From where he was poring over his Tables of Trade
and Finance;
My hands, when I heard him coming would drop
from the chords or the keys,
But ever I fail'd to please him, however I strove to
please—
All day long far-off in the cloud of the city, and
there
Lost, head and heart, in the chances of dividend,
consol, and share—
And at home if I sought for a kindly caress, being
woman and weak,
His formal kiss fell chill as a flake of snow on the
cheek:
And so, when I bore him a girl, when I held it aloft
in my joy,
He look'd at it coldly, and said to me "Pity it isn't
a boy."
The one thing given me, to love and to live for,
glanced at in scorn!
The child that I felt I could die for—as if she were
basely born!
I had lived a wild-flower life, I was planted now in
a tomb;

The daisy will shut to the shadow, I closed my
heart to the gloom;
I threw myself all abroad—I would play my part
with the young
By the low foot-lights of the world—and I caught
the wreath that was flung.

III.

Mother, I have not—however their tongues may
have babbled of me—
Sinn'd thro' an animal vileness, for all but a dwarf
was he,
And all but a hunchback too; and I look'd at him,
first, askance
With pity—not he the knight for an amorous girl's
romance!
Tho' wealthy enough to have bask'd in the light of
a dowerless smile,
Having lands at home and abroad in a rich West-
Indian isle;
But I came on him once at a ball, the heart of a
listening crowd—
Why, what a brow was there! he was seated—
speaking aloud
To women, the flower of the time, and men at the
helm of state—
Flowing with easy greatness and touching on all
things great,

Science, philosophy, song—till I felt myself ready
to weep
For I knew not what, when I heard that voice,—as
mellow and deep
As a psalm by a mighty master and peal'd from an
organ,—roll
Rising and falling—for, Mother, the voice was the
voice of the soul;
And the sun of the soul made day in the dark of
his wonderful eyes.
Here was the hand that would help me, would heal
me—the heart that was wise!
And he, poor man, when he learnt that I hated the
ring I wore,
He helpt me with death, and he heal'd me with
sorrow for evermore.

IV.

For I broke the bond. That day my nurse had
brought me the child.
The small sweet face was flush'd, but it coo'd to
the Mother and smiled.
"Anything ailing," I ask'd her, "with baby?" She
shook her head,
And the Motherless Mother kiss'd it, and turn'd in
her haste and fled.

V.

Low warm winds had gently breathed us away from
the land—
Ten long sweet summer days upon deck, sitting
hand in hand—
When he clothed a naked mind with the wisdom
and wealth of his own,
And I bow'd myself down as a slave to his intel-
lectual throne,
When he coin'd into English gold some treasure of
classical song,
When he flouted a statesman's error, or flamed at a
public wrong,
When he rose as it were on the wings of an eagle
beyond me, and past
Over the range and the change of the world from
the first to the last,
When he spoke of his tropical home in the canes
by the purple tide,
And the high star-crowns of his palms on the deep-
wooded mountain-side,
And cliffs all robed in lianas that dropt to the brink
of his bay,
And trees like the towers of a minster, the sons of
a winterless day.
"Paradise there!" so he said, but I seem'd in Para-
dise then

With the first great love I had felt for the first and
greatest of men,
Ten long days of summer and sin—if it must be
so—
But days of a larger light than I ever again shall
know—
Days that will glimmer, I fear, thro' life to my latest
breath;
"No frost there," so he said, "as in truest Love no
Death."

VI.

Mother, one morning a bird with a warble plaintively
sweet
Perch'd on the shrouds, and then fell fluttering down
at my feet;
I took it, he made it a cage, we fondled it, Stephen
and I,
But it died, and I thought of the child for a
moment, I scarce know why.

VII.

But if sin be sin, not inherited fate, as many will
say,
My sin to my desolate little one found me at sea
on a day,
When her orphan wail came borne in the shriek of
a growing wind,

And a voice rang out in the thunders of Ocean and
Heaven "Thou hast sinn'd."
And down in the cabin were we, for the towering
crest of the tides
Plunged on the vessel and swept in a cataract off
from her sides,
And ever the great storm grew with a howl and a
hoot of the blast
In the rigging, voices of hell—then came the crash
of the mast.
"The wages of sin is death," and then I began to
weep,
"I am the Jonah, the crew should cast me into the
deep,
For ah God, what a heart was mine to forsake her
even for you."
"Never the heart among women," he said, "more
tender and true."
"The heart! not a mother's heart, when I left my
darling alone."
"Comfort yourself, for the heart of the father will
care for his own."
"The heart of the father will spurn her," I cried,
"for the sin of the wife,
The cloud of the mother's shame will enfold her
and darken her life."
Then his pale face twitch'd; "O Stephen, I love
you, I love you, and yet"—

As I lean'd away from his arms—"would God, we
had never met!"
And he spoke not—only the storm; till after a little,
I yearn'd
For his voice again, and he call'd to me "Kiss me!"
and there—as I turn'd—
"The heart, the heart!" I kiss'd him, I clung to the
sinking form,
And the storm went roaring above us, and he—was
out of the storm.

VIII.

And then, then, Mother, the ship stagger'd under a
thunderous shock,
That shook us asunder, as if she had struck and
crash'd on a rock;
For a huge sea smote every soul from the decks of
The Falcon but one;
All of them, all but the man that was lash'd to the
helm had gone;
And I fell—and the storm and the days went by,
but I knew no more—
Lost myself—lay like the dead by the dead on the
cabin floor,
Dead to the death beside me, and lost to the loss
that was mine,
With a dim dream, now and then, of a hand giving
bread and wine,

Till I woke from the trance, and the ship stood
still, and the skies were blue,
But the face I had known, O Mother, was not the
face that I knew.

IX.

The strange misfeaturing mask that I saw so amazed
me, that I
Stumbled on deck, half mad. I would fling myself
over and die!
But one—he was waving a flag—the one man left
on the wreck—
"Woman"—he graspt at my arm—"stay there"—I
crouch'd upon deck—
"We are sinking, and yet there's hope: look yon-
der," he cried, "a sail"
In a tone so rough that I broke into passionate
tears, and the wail
Of a beaten babe, till I saw that a boat was near-
ing us—then
All on a sudden I thought, I shall look on the child
again.

X.

They lower'd me down the side, and there in the
boat I lay
With sad eyes fixt on the lost sea-home, as we
glided away,

And I sigh'd, as the low dark hull dipt under the
smiling main,
"Had I stay'd with *him*, I had now—with *him*—
been out of my pain."

XI.

They took us aboard: the crew were gentle, the
captain kind;
But *I* was the lonely slave of an often-wandering
mind;
For whenever a rougher gust might tumble a
stormier wave,
"O Stephen," I moan'd, "I am coming to thee in
thine Ocean-grave."
And again, when a balmier breeze curl'd over a
peacefuller sea,
I found myself moaning again "O child, I am com-
ing to thee."

XII.

The broad white brow of the Isle—that bay with
the colour'd sand—
Rich was the rose of sunset there, as we drew to
the land;
All so quiet the ripple would hardly blanch into
spray
At the feet of the cliff; and I pray'd—"my child"
—for I still could pray—

"May her life be as blissfully calm, be never
gloom'd by the curse
Of a sin, not hers!"
Was it well with the child?
I wrote to the nurse
Who had borne my flower on her hireling heart;
and an answer came
Not from the nurse—nor yet to the wife—to her
maiden name!
I shook as I open'd the letter—I knew that hand
too well—
And from it a scrap, clipt out of the "deaths" in a
paper, fell.
"Ten long sweet summer days" of fever, and want
of care!
And gone—that day of the storm—O Mother, she
came to me there.

DESPAIR.

A man and his wife having lost faith in a God, and hope of a life to come, and being utterly miserable in this, resolve to end themselves by drowning. The woman is drowned, but the man rescued by a minister of the sect he had abandoned.

I.

Is it you, that preach'd in the chapel there looking
over the sand?
Follow'd us too that night, and dogg'd us, and
drew me to land?

II.

What did I feel that night? You are curious. How
should I tell?
Does it matter so much what I felt? You rescued
me—yet—was it well
That you came unwish'd for, uncall'd, between me
and the deep and my doom,
Three days since, three more dark days of the
Godless gloom
Of a life without sun, without health, without hope,
without any delight

In anything here upon earth? but ah God, that
night, that night
When the rolling eyes of the light-house there on
the fatal neck
Of land running out into rock—they had saved
many hundreds from wreck—
Glared on our way toward death, I remember I
thought, as we past,
Does it matter how many they saved? we are all of
us wreck'd at last—
"Do you fear," and there came thro' the roar of the
breaker a whisper, a breath,
"Fear? am I not with you? I am frighted at life
not death."

III.

And the suns of the limitless Universe sparkled
and shone in the sky,
Flashing with fires as of God, but we knew that
their light was a lie—
Bright as with deathless hope—but, however they
sparkled and shone,
The dark little worlds running round them were
worlds of woe like our own—
No soul in the heaven above, no soul on the earth
below,
A fiery scroll written over with lamentation and
woe.

IV.

See, we were nursed in the drear night-fold of your
fatalist creed,
And we turn'd to the growing dawn, we had hoped
for a dawn indeed,
When the light of a Sun that was coming would
scatter the ghosts of the Past,
And the cramping creeds that had madden'd the
peoples would vanish at last,
And we broke away from the Christ, our human
brother and friend,
For He spoke, or it seem'd that He spoke, of a
Hell without help, without end.

V.

Hoped for a dawn and it came, but the promise
had faded away;
We had past from a cheerless night to the glare of
a drearier day;
He is only a cloud and a smoke who was once a
pillar of fire,
The guess of a worm in the dust and the shadow
of its desire—
Of a worm as it writhes in a world of the weak
trodden down by the strong,
Of a dying worm in a world, all massacre, murder,
and wrong.

VI.

O we poor orphans of nothing—alone on that lonely
shore—
Born of the brainless Nature who knew not that
which she bore!
Trusting no longer that earthly flower would be
heavenly fruit—
Come from the brute, poor souls—no souls—and to
die with the brute——

VII.

Nay, but I am not claiming your pity: I know you
of old—
Small pity for those that have ranged from the nar-
row warmth of your fold,
Where you bawl'd the dark side of your faith and
a God of eternal rage,
Till you flung us back on ourselves, and the human
heart, and the Age.

VIII.

But pity—the Pagan held it a vice—was in her
and in me,
Helpless, taking the place of the pitying God that
should be!
Pity for all that aches in the grasp of an idiot
power,

And pity for our own selves on an earth that bore
not a flower;
Pity for all that suffers on land or in air or the
deep,
And pity for our own selves till we long'd for
eternal sleep.

IX.

"Lightly step over the sands! the waters—you hear
them call!
Life with its anguish, and horrors, and errors—
away with it all!"
And she laid her hand in my own—she was always
loyal and sweet—
Till the points of the foam in the dusk came play-
ing about our feet.
There was a strong sea-current would sweep us out
to the main.
"Ah God" tho' I felt as I spoke I was taking the
name in vain—
"Ah God" and we turn'd to each other, we kiss'd,
we embraced, she and I,
Knowing the Love we were used to believe ever-
lasting would die:
We had read their know-nothing books and we
lean'd to the darker side—
Ah God, should we find Him, perhaps, perhaps, if
we died, if we died;

We never had found Him on earth, this earth is a
fatherless Hell—
"Dear Love, for ever and ever, for ever and ever
farewell,"
Never a cry so desolate, not since the world began,
Never a kiss so sad, no, not since the coming of
man!

x.

But the blind wave cast me ashore, and you saved
me, a valueless life.
Not a grain of gratitude mine! You have parted
the man from the wife.
I am left alone on the land, she is all alone in the
sea;
If a curse meant ought, I would curse you for not
having let me be.

xi.

Visions of youth—for my brain was drunk with the
water, it seems;
I had past into perfect quiet at length out of
pleasant dreams,
And the transient trouble of drowning—what was
it when match'd with the pains
Of the hellish heat of a wretched life rushing back
thro' the veins?

XII.

Why should I live? one son had forged on his father and fled,
And if I believed in a God, I would thank him, the other is dead,
And there was a baby-girl, that had never look'd on the light:
Happiest she of us all, for she past from the night to the night.

XIII.

But the crime, if a crime, of her eldest-born, her glory, her boast,
Struck hard at the tender heart of the mother, and broke it almost;
Tho', glory and shame dying out for ever in endless time,
Does it matter so much whether crown'd for a virtue, or hang'd for a crime?

XIV.

And ruin'd by *him*, by *him*, I stood there, naked, amazed
In a world of arrogant opulence, fear'd myself turning crazed,
And I would not be mock'd in a madhouse! and she, the delicate wife,

With a grief that could only be cured, if cured, by
the surgeon's knife,—

XV.

Why should we bear with an hour of torture, a
moment of pain,
If every man die for ever, if all his griefs are in vain,
And the homeless planet at length will be wheel'd
thro' the silence of space,
Motherless evermore of an ever-vanishing race,
When the worm shall have writhed its last, and its
last brother-worm will have fled
From the dead fossil skull that is left in the rocks
of an earth that is dead?

XVI.

Have I crazed myself over their horrible infidel
writings? O yes,
For these are the new dark ages, you see, of the
popular press,
When the bat comes out of his cave, and the owls
are whooping at noon.
And Doubt is the lord of this dunghill and crows
to the sun and the moon,
Till the Sun and the Moon of our science are both
of them turn'd into blood,
And Hope will have broken her heart, running
after a shadow of good;

For their knowing and know-nothing books are
scatter'd from hand to hand—
We have knelt in your know-all chapel too looking
over the sand.

XVII.

What! I should call on that Infinite Love that has
served us so well?
Infinite cruelty rather that made everlasting Hell,
Made us, foreknew us, foredoom'd us, and does
what he will with his own;
Better our dead brute mother who never has heard
us groan!

XVIII.

Hell? if the souls of men were immortal, as men
have been told,
The lecher would cleave to his lusts, and the miser
would yearn for his gold,
And so there were Hell for ever! but were there a
God as you say,
His Love would have power over Hell till it utterly
vanish'd away.

XIX.

Ah yet—I have had some glimmer, at times, in
my gloomiest woe,
Of a God behind all—after all—the great God for
aught that I know;

But the God of Love and of Hell together—they
cannot be thought,
If there be such a God, may that Great God curse
him and bring him to nought!

XX.

Blasphemy! whose is the fault? is it mine? for
why would you save
A madman to vex you with wretched words, who
is best in his grave?
Blasphemy! ay, why not, being damn'd beyond
hope of grace?
O would I were yonder with her, and away from
your faith and your face!
Blasphemy! true! I have scared you pale with my
scandalous talk,
But the blasphemy to *my* mind lies all in the way
that you walk.

XXI.

Hence! she is gone! can I stay? can I breathe
divorced from the Past?
You needs must have good lynx-eyes if I do not
escape you at last.
Our orthodox coroner doubtless will find it a felo-
de-se,
And the stake and the cross-road, fool, if you will,
does it matter to me?

THE ANCIENT SAGE.

A THOUSAND summers ere the time of Christ
From out his ancient city came a Seer
Whom one that loved, and honour'd him, and yet
Was no disciple, richly garb'd, but worn
From wasteful living, follow'd—in his hand
A scroll of verse—till that old man before
A cavern whence an affluent fountain pour'd
From darkness into daylight, turn'd and spoke.

This wealth of waters might but seem to draw
From yon dark cave, but, son, the source is higher,
Yon summit half-a-league in air—and higher,
The cloud that hides it—higher still, the heavens
Whereby the cloud was moulded, and whereout
The cloud descended. Force is from the heights.
I am wearied of our city, son, and go
To spend my one last year among the hills.
What hast thou there? Some deathsong for the
Ghouls
To make their banquet relish? let me read.

"How far thro' all the bloom and brake
That nightingale is heard!
What power but the bird's could make
This music in the bird?
How summer-bright are yonder skies,
And earth as fair in hue!
And yet what sign of aught that lies
Behind the green and blue?
But man to-day is fancy's fool
As man hath ever been.
The nameless Power, or Powers, that rule
Were never heard or seen."

If thou would'st hear the Nameless, and wilt dive
Into the Temple-cave of thine own self,
There, brooding by the central altar, thou
May'st haply learn the Nameless hath a voice,
By which thou wilt abide, if thou be wise,
As if thou knewest, tho' thou canst not know;
For Knowledge is the swallow on the lake
That sees and stirs the surface-shadow there
But never yet hath dipt into the abysm,
The Abysm of all Abysms, beneath, within
The blue of sky and sea, the green of earth,
And in the million-millionth of a grain
Which cleft and cleft again for evermore,
And ever vanishing, never vanishes,

To me, my son, more mystic than myself,
Or even than the Nameless is to me.
And when thou sendest thy free soul thro' heaven,
Nor understandest bound nor boundlessness,
Thou seest the Nameless of the hundred names.
And if the Nameless should withdraw from all
Thy frailty counts most real, all thy world
Might vanish like thy shadow in the dark.

"And since—from when this earth began—
The Nameless never came
Among us, never spake with man,
And never named the Name"—

Thou canst not prove the Nameless, O my son,
Nor canst thou prove the world thou movest in,
Thou canst not prove that thou art body alone,
Nor canst thou prove that thou art spirit alone
Nor canst thou prove that thou art both in one:
Thou canst not prove thou art immortal, no
Nor yet that thou art mortal—nay my son,
Thou canst not prove that I, who speak with thee,
Am not thyself in converse with thyself,
For nothing worthy proving can be proven,
Nor yet disproven: wherefore thou be wise,
Cleave ever to the sunnier side of doubt,
And cling to Faith beyond the forms of Faith!

She reels not in the storm of warring words,
She brightens at the clash of "Yes" and "No,"
She sees the Best that glimmers thro' the Worst,
She feels the Sun is hid but for a night,
She spies the summer thro' the winter bud,
She tastes the fruit before the blossom falls,
She hears the lark within the songless egg,
She finds the fountain where they wail'd "Mirage"!

"What Power? aught akin to Mind,
The mind in me and you?
Or power as of the Gods gone blind
Who see not what they do?"

But some in yonder city hold, my son,
That none but Gods could build this house of ours,
So beautiful, vast, various, so beyond
All work of man, yet, like all work of man,
A beauty with defect——till That which knows,
And is not known, but felt thro' what we feel
Within ourselves is highest, shall descend
On this half-deed, and shape it at the last
According to the Highest in the Highest.

"What Power but the Years that make
And break the vase of clay,
And stir the sleeping earth, and wake
The bloom that fades away?

What rulers but the Days and Hours
That cancel weal with woe,
And wind the front of youth with flowers,
And cap our age with snow?"

The days and hours are ever glancing by,
And seem to flicker past thro' sun and shade,
Or short, or long, as Pleasure leads, or Pain;
But with the Nameless is nor Day nor Hour;
Tho' we, thin minds, who creep from thought to thought
Break into "Thens" and "Whens" the Eternal Now:
This double seeming of the single world!—
My words are like the babblings in a dream
Of nightmare, when the babblings break the dream.
But thou be wise in this dream-world of ours,
Nor take thy dial for thy deity,
But make the passing shadow serve thy will.

"The years that made the stripling wise
Undo their work again,
And leave him, blind of heart and eyes,
The last and least of men;
Who clings to earth, and once would dare
Hell-heat or Arctic cold,
And now one breath of cooler air
Would loose him from his hold;

His winter chills him to the root,
He withers marrow and mind;
The kernel of the shrivell'd fruit
Is jutting thro' the rind;
The tiger spasms tear his chest,
The palsy wags his head;
The wife, the sons, who love him best
Would fain that he were dead;
The griefs by which he once was wrung
Were never worth the while"—

Who knows? or whether this earth-narrow life
Be yet but yolk, and forming in the shell?

"The shaft of scorn that once had stung
But wakes a dotard smile."

The placid gleam of sunset after storm!

"The statesman's brain that sway'd the past
Is feebler than his knees;
The passive sailor wrecks at last
In ever-silent seas;
The warrior hath forgot his arms,
The Learned all his lore;
The changing market frets or charms
The merchant's hope no more;

The prophet's beacon burn'd in vain,
And now is lost in cloud;
The plowman passes, bent with pain,
To mix with what he plow'd;
The poet whom his Age would quote
As heir of endless fame—
He knows not ev'n the book he wrote,
Not even his own name.
For man has overlived his day,
And, darkening in the light,
Scarce feels the senses break away
To mix with ancient Night."

The shell must break before the bird can fly.

"The years that when my Youth began
Had set the lily and rose
By all my ways where'er they ran,
Have ended mortal foes;
My rose of love for ever gone,
My lily of truth and trust—
They made her lily and rose in one,
And changed her into dust.
O rosetree planted in my grief,
And growing, on her tomb,
Her dust is greening in your leaf,
Her blood is in your bloom.

O slender lily waving there,
And laughing back the light,
In vain you tell me "Earth is fair"
When all is dark as night."

My son, the world is dark with griefs and graves,
So dark that men cry out against the Heavens.
Who knows but that the darkness is in man?
The doors of Night may be the gates of Light;
For wert thou born or blind or deaf, and then
Suddenly heal'd, how would'st thou glory in all
The splendours and the voices of the world!
And we, the poor earth's dying race, and yet
No phantoms, watching from a phantom shore
Await the last and largest sense to make
The phantom walls of this illusion fade,
And show us that the world is wholly fair.

"But vain the tears for darken'd years
As laughter over wine,
And vain the laughter as the tears,
O brother, mine or thine,
For all that laugh, and all that weep,
And all that breathe are one
Slight ripple on the boundless deep
That moves, and all is gone."

But that one ripple on the boundless deep
Feels that the deep is boundless, and itself
For ever changing form, but evermore
One with the boundless motion of the deep.

"Yet wine and laughter friends! and set
The lamps alight, and call
For golden music, and forget
The darkness of the pall."

If utter darkness closed the day, my son——
But earth's dark forehead flings athwart the heavens
Her shadow crown'd with stars—and yonder—out
To northward—some that never set, but pass
From sight and night to lose themselves in day.
I hate the black negation of the bier,
And wish the dead, as happier than ourselves
And higher, having climb'd one step beyond
Our village miseries, might be borne in white
To burial or to burning, hymn'd from hence
With songs in praise of death, and crown'd with flowers!

"O worms and maggots of to-day
Without their hope of wings!"

But louder than thy rhyme the silent Word
Of that world-prophet in the heart of man.

"Tho' some have gleams or so they say
Of more than mortal things."

To-day? but what of yesterday? for oft
On me, when boy, there came what then I call'd,
Who knew no books and no philosophies,
In my boy-phrase "The Passion of the Past."
The first gray streak of earliest summer-dawn,
The last long stripe of waning crimson gloom,
As if the late and early were but one--
A height, a broken grange, a grove, a flower
Had murmurs "Lost and gone and lost and gone!"
A breath, a whisper—some divine farewell—
Desolate sweetness—far and far away—
What had he loved, what had he lost, the boy?
I know not and I speak of what has been.
And more, my son! for more than once when I
Sat all alone, revolving in myself
The word that is the symbol of myself,
The mortal limit of the Self was loosed,
And past into the Nameless, as a cloud
Melts into Heaven. I touch'd my limbs, the limbs
Were strange not mine—and yet no shade of doubt,
But utter clearness, and thro' loss of Self
The gain of such large life as match'd with ours
Were Sun to spark—unshadowable in words,
Themselves but shadows of a shadow-world.

"And idle gleams will come and go,
But still the clouds remain;"

The clouds themselves are children of the Sun.

"And Night and Shadow rule below
When only Day should reign."

And Day and Night are children of the Sun,
And idle gleams to thee are light to me.
Some say, the Light was father of the Night,
And some, the Night was father of the Light.
No night no day!—I touch thy world again—
No ill no good! such counter-terms, my son,
Are border-races, holding, each its own
By endless war: but night enough is there
In yon dark city: get thee back: and since
The key to that weird casket, which for thee
But holds a skull, is neither thine nor mine,
But in the hand of what is more than man,
Or in man's hand when man is more than man,
Let be thy wail and help thy fellow men,
And make thy gold thy vassal not thy king,
And fling free alms into the beggar's bowl,
And send the day into the darken'd heart;
Nor list for guerdon in the voice of men,
A dying echo from a falling wall;

Nor care—for Hunger hath the Evil eye—
To vex the noon with fiery gems, or fold
Thy presence in the silk of sumptuous looms;
Nor roll thy viands on a luscious tongue,
Nor drown thyself with flies in honied wine;
Nor thou be rageful, like a handled bee,
And lose thy life by usage of thy sting;
Nor harm an adder thro' the lust for harm,
Nor make a snail's horn shrink for wantonness;
And more—think well! Do-well will follow thought,
And in the fatal sequence of this world
An evil thought may soil thy children's blood;
But curb the beast would cast thee in the mire,
And leave the hot swamp of voluptuousness
A cloud between the Nameless and thyself,
And lay thine uphill shoulder to the wheel,
And climb the Mount of Blessing, whence, if thou
Look higher, then—perchance—thou mayest—be-
yond
A hundred ever-rising mountain lines,
And past the range of Night and Shadow—see
The high-heaven dawn of more than mortal day
Strike on the Mount of Vision!
So, farewell.

THE FLIGHT.

I.

ARE you sleeping? have you forgotten? do not sleep,
my sister dear!
How *can* you sleep? the morning brings the day I
hate and fear;
The cock has crow'd already once, he crows before
his time;
Awake! the creeping glimmer steals, the hills are
white with rime.

II.

Ah, clasp me in your arms, sister, ah, fold me to
your breast!
Ah, let me weep my fill once more, and cry myself
to rest!
To rest? to rest and wake no more were better rest
for me,
Than to waken every morning to that face I loathe
to see:

III.

I envied your sweet slumber, all night so calm you
lay,
The night was calm, the morn is calm, and like
another day;
But I could wish yon moaning sea would rise and
burst the shore,
And such a whirlwind blow these woods, as never
blew before.

IV.

For, one by one, the stars went down across the
gleaming pane,
And project after project rose, and all of them were
vain;
The blackthorn-blossom fades and falls and leaves
the bitter sloe,
The hope I catch at vanishes and youth is turn'd
to woe.

V.

Come, speak a little comfort! all night I pray'd
with tears,
And yet no comfort came to me, and now the morn
appears,
When he will tear me from your side, who bought
me for his slave:

This father pays his debt with me, and weds me to
my grave.

VI.

What father, this or mine, was he, who, on that
summer day
When I had fall'n from off the crag we clamber'd
up in play,
Found, fear'd me dead, and groan'd, and took and
kiss'd me, and again
He kiss'd me; and I loved him then; he *was* my
father then.

VII.

No father now, the tyrant vassal of a tyrant vice!
The Godless Jephtha vows his child . . . to one
cast of the dice.
These ancient woods, this Hall at last will go—
perhaps have gone,
Except his own meek daughter yield her life, heart,
soul to one—

VIII.

To one who knows I scorn him. O the formal
mocking bow,
The cruel smile, the courtly phrase that masks his
malice now—

But often in the sidelong eyes a gleam of all things ill—
It is not Love but Hate that weds a bride against her will;

IX.

Hate, that would pluck from this true breast the locket that I wear,
The precious crystal into which I braided Edwin's hair!
The love that keeps this heart alive beats on it night and day—
One golden curl, his golden gift, before he past away.

X.

He left us weeping in the woods; his boat was on the sand;
How slowly down the rocks he went, how loth to quit the land!
And all my life was darken'd, as I saw the white sail run,
And darken, up that lane of light into the setting sun.

XI.

How often have we watch'd the sun fade from us thro' the West,

And follow Edwin to those isles, those islands of
the Blest!
Is *he* not there? would I were there, the friend, the
bride, the wife,
With him, where summer never dies, with Love,
the Sun of life!

XII.

O would I were in Edwin's arms—once more—to
feel his breath
Upon my cheek—on Edwin's ship, with Edwin,
ev'n in death,
Tho' all about the shuddering wreck the death-
white sea should rave,
Or if lip were laid to lip on the pillows of the wave.

XIII.

Shall I take *him?* I kneel with *him?* I swear and
swear forsworn
To love him most, whom most I loathe, to honour
whom I scorn?
The Fiend would yell, the grave would yawn, my
mother's ghost would rise—
To lie, to lie—in God's own house—the blackest of
all lies!

XIV.

Why—rather than that hand in mine, tho' every
pulse would freeze,

I'd sooner fold an icy corpse dead of some foul
disease:
Wed him? I will not wed him, let them spurn me
from the doors,
And I will wander till I die about the barren moors.

XV.

The dear, mad bride who stabb'd her bridegroom
on her bridal night—
If mad, then I am mad, but sane, if she were in
the right.
My father's madness makes me mad—but words
are only words!
I am not mad, not yet, not quite—There! listen
how the birds

XVI.

Begin to warble yonder in the budding orchard
trees!
The lark has past from earth to Heaven upon the
morning breeze!
How gladly, were I one of those, how early would
I wake!
And yet the sorrow that I bear is sorrow for *his*
sake.

XVII.

They love their mates, to whom they sing; or else
their songs, that meet

The morning with such music, would never be so
sweet!
And tho' these fathers will not hear, the blessed
Heavens are just,
And Love is fire, and burns the feet would trample
it to dust.

XVIII.

A door was open'd in the house—who? who? my
father sleeps!
A stealthy foot upon the stair! he—some one—this
way creeps!
If he? yes, he . . . lurks, listens, fears his victim
may have fled—
He! where is some sharp-pointed thing? he comes,
and finds me dead.

XIX.

Not he, not yet! and time to act—but how my
temples burn!
And idle fancies flutter me, I know not where to
turn;
Speak to me, sister; counsel me; this marriage must
not be.
You only know the love that makes the world a
world to me!

XX.

Our gentle mother, had *she* lived—but we were left
alone:
That other left us to ourselves; he cared not for
his own;
So all the summer long we roam'd in these wild
woods of ours,
My Edwin loved to call us then "His two wild
woodland flowers."

XXI.

Wild flowers blowing side by side in God's free
light and air,
Wild flowers of the secret woods, when Edwin
found us there,
Wild woods in which we roved with him, and heard
his passionate vow,
Wild woods in which we rove no more, if we be
parted now!

XXII.

You will not leave me thus in grief to wander forth
forlorn;
We never changed a bitter word, not one since we
were born;
Our dying mother join'd our hands; she knew this
father well;

She bad us love, like souls in Heaven, and now I
fly from Hell,

XXIII.

And you with me; and we shall light upon some
lonely shore,
Some lodge within the waste sea-dunes, and hear
the waters roar,
And see the ships from out the West go dipping
thro' the foam,
And sunshine on that sail at last which brings our
Edwin home.

XXIV.

But look, the morning grows apace, and lights the
old church-tower,
And lights the clock; the hand points five—O me
—it strikes the hour—
I bide no more, I meet my fate, whatever ills
betide!
Arise, my own true sister, come forth! the world is
wide.

XXV.

And yet my heart is ill at ease, my eyes are dim
with dew,
I seem to see a new-dug grave up yonder by the
yew!

If we should never more return, but wander hand in
hand
With breaking hearts, without a friend, and in a
distant land.

XXVI.

O sweet, they tell me that the world is hard, and
harsh of mind,
But can it be so hard, so harsh, as those that should
be kind?
That matters not: let come what will; at last the
end is sure,
And every heart that loves with truth is equal to
endure.

TOMORROW.

I.

HER, that yer Honour was spakin' to? Whin, yer
Honour? last year—
Standin' here be the bridge, when last yer Honour
was here?
An' yer Honour ye gev her the top of the mornin',
"Tomorra" says she.
What did they call her, yer Honour? They call'd
her Molly Magee.
An' yer Honour's the thrue ould blood that always
manes to be kind,
But there's rason in all things, yer Honour, for
Molly was out of her mind.

II.

Shure, an' meself remimbers wan night comin' down
be the sthrame,
An' it seems to me now like a bit of yisther-day in
a dhrame—

Here where yer Honour seen her—there was but a
slip of a moon,
But I hard thim—Molly Magee wid her batchelor,
Danny O'Roon—
"You've been takin' a dhrop o' the crathur" an'
Danny says "Troth, an' I been
Dhrinkin' yer health wid Shamus O'Shea at Katty's
shebeen;*
But I must be lavin' ye soon." "Ochone are ye
goin' away?"
"Goin' to cut the Sassenach whate" he says "over
the say"—
"An' whin will ye meet me agin?" an' I hard him
"Molly asthore,
I'll meet you agin tomorra," says he, "be the chapel-
door."
"An' whin are ye goin' to lave me?" "O' Monday
mornin'" says he;
"An shure thin ye'll meet me tomorra?" "Tomorra,
tomorra, Machree!"
Thin Molly's ould mother, yer Honour, that had no
likin' for Dan,
Call'd from her cabin an' tould her to come away
from the man,
An' Molly Magee kem flyin' acrass me, as light as
a lark,

* Grog-shop.

An' Dan stood there for a minute, an' thin wint
into the dark.
But wirrah! the storm that night—the tundher, an'
rain that fell,
An' the sthrames runnin' down at the back o' the
glin 'ud 'a dhrownded Hell.

III.

But airth was at pace nixt mornin', an' Hiven in
its glory smiled,
As the Holy Mother o' Glory that smiles at her
sleepin' child—
Ethen—she stept an the chapel-green, an' she turn'd
herself roun'
Wid a diamond dhrop in her eye, for Danny was
not to be foun',
An' many's the time that I watch'd her at mass
lettin' down the tear,
For the Divil a Danny was there, yer Honour, for
forty year.

IV.

Och, Molly Magee, with the red o' the rose an' the
white o' the May,
An' yer hair as black as the night, an' yer eyes as
bright as the day!
Achora, yer laste little whishper was sweet as the
lilt of a bird!

Acushla, ye set me heart batin' to music wid ivery
word!
An' sorra the Queen wid her sceptre in sich an
illigant han',
An' the fall of yer foot in the dance was as light as
snow an the lan',
An' the sun kem out of a cloud whiniver ye walkt
in the shtreet,
An' Shamus O'Shea was yer shadda, an' laid him-
self undher yer feet,
An' I loved ye meself wid a heart and a half, me
darlin', and he
'Ud 'a shot his own sowl dead for a kiss of ye,
Molly Magee.

v.

But shure we wor betther frinds whin I crack'd his
skull for her sake,
An' he ped me back wid the best he could give at
ould Donovan's wake—
For the boys wor about her agin whin Dan didn't
come to the fore,
An' Shamus along wid the rest, but she put thim all
to the door.
An', afther, I thried her meself av the bird 'ud come
to me call,
But Molly, begorrah, 'ud listhen to naither at all, at all.

VI.

An' her nabours an' frinds 'ud consowl an' condowl
wid her, airly and late,
"Your Danny," they says, "niver crasst over say to
Sassenach whate;
He's gone to the States, aroon, an' he's married
another wife,
An' ye'll niver set eyes an the face of the thraithur
agin in life!
An' to dhrame of a married man, death alive, is a
mortial sin."
But Molly says "I'd his hand-promise, an' shure
he'll meet me agin."

VI.

An' afther her paärints had inter'd glory, an' both
in wan day,
She began to spake to herself, the crathur, an
whishper, an' say
"Tomorra, Tomorra!" an' Father Molowny he tuk
her in han',
"Molly, you're manin'," he says, "me dear, av I
undherstan',
That ye'll meet your paärints agin an' yer Danny
O'Roon afore God
Wid his blessed Marthyrs an' Saints;" an' she gev
him a frindly nod,

"Tomorra, Tomorra," she says, an' she didn't intind
to desave,
But her wits wor dead, an' her hair was as white
as the snow an a grave.

VIII.

Arrah now, here last month they wor diggin' the
bog, an' they foun'
Dhrownded in black bog-wather a corp lyin' undher
groun'.

IX.

Yer Honour's own agint, he says to me wanst, at
Katty's shebeen,
"The Divil take all the black lan', for a blessin' 'ud
come with the green!"
An' where 'ud the poor man, thin, cut his bit o'
turf for the fire?
But och! bad scran to the bogs whin they swallies
the man intire!
An' sorra the bog that's in Hiven wid all the light
an' the glow,
An' there's hate enough, shure, widout *thim* in the
Divil's kitchen below.

X.

Thim ould blind nagers in Agypt, I hard his River-
ence say,

Could keep their haithen kings in the flesh for the
Jidgemint day,
An', faix, be the piper o' Moses, they kep the cat
an' the dog,
But it 'ud 'a been aisier work av they lived be an
Irish bog.

XI.

How-an-iver they laid this body they foun' an the
grass
Be the chapel-door, an' the people 'ud see it that
wint into mass—
But a frish gineration had riz, an' most of the ould
was few,
An' I didn't know him meself, an' nōne of the
parish knew.

XII.

But Molly kem limpin' up wid her stick, she was
lamed iv a knee,
Thin a slip of a gossoon call'd, "Div ye know him,
Molly Magee?"
An' she stood up strait as the Queen of the world—
she lifted her head—
"He said he would meet me tomorra!" an' dhropt
down dead an the dead.

XIII.

Och, Molly, we thought, machree, ye would start
back agin into life,

Whin we laid yez, aich be aich, at yer wake like husban' an' wife.
Sorra the dhry eye thin but was wet for the frinds that was gone!
Sorra the silent throat but we hard it cryin' "Ochone!"
An' Shamus O'Shea that has now ten children, hansome an' tall,
Him an' his childer wor keenin' as if he had lost thim all.

XIV.

Thin his Riverence buried thim both in wan grave be the dead boor-tree,*
The young man Danny O'Roon wid his ould woman, Molly Magee.

XV.

May all the flowers o' Jeroosilim blossom an' spring from the grass,
Imbrashin' an' kissin' aich other—as ye did—over yer Crass!
An' the lark fly out o' the flowers wid his song to the Sun an' the Moon,
An' tell thim in Hiven about Molly Magee an' her Danny O'Roon,
Till Holy St. Pether gets up wid his kays an' opens the gate!

* Elder-tree.

An' shure, be the Crass, that's better nor cuttin' the
Sassenach whate
To be there wid the Blessed Mother, an' Saints an'
Marthyrs galore,
An' singin' yer "Aves" an' "Pathers" for iver an'
ivermore.

XVI.

An' now that I tould yer Honour whativer I hard
an' seen,
Yer Honour 'ill give me a thrifle to dhrink yer
health in potheen.

THE SPINSTER'S SWEET-ARTS.

I.

Milk for my sweet-arts, Bess! fur it mun be the time about now
When Molly cooms in fro' the far-end close wi' her paäils fro' the cow.
Eh! tha be new to the plaäce—thou'rt gaäpin'—doesn't tha see
I calls 'em arter the fellers es once was sweet upo' me?

II.

Naäy to be sewer it be past 'er time. What maäkes 'er sa laäte?
Goä to the laäne at the back, an' looök thruf Maddison's gaäte!

III.

Sweet-arts! Molly belike may 'a lighted to-night upo' one.
Sweet-arts! thanks to the Lord that I niver not listen'd to noän!
So I sits i' my oän armchair wi' my oän kettle theere o' the hob,

An' Tommy the fust, an' Tommy the second, an'
Steevie an' Rob.

IV.

Rob, coom oop 'ere o' my knee. Thou sees that i'
spite o' the men
I 'a kep' thruf thick an' thin my two 'oonderd a-
year to mysen;
Yis! thaw tha call'd me es pretty es ony lass i' the
Shere,
An' thou be es pretty a Tabby, but Robby I seed
thruf ya theere.

V.

Feyther 'ud saäy I wur ugly as sin, an' I beänt not
vaäin,
But I niver wur downright hugly, thaw soom 'ud 'a
thowt ma plaäin,
An' I wasn't sa plaäin i' pink ribbons, ye said I wur
pretty i' pinks,
An' I liked to 'ear it I did, but I beänt sich a fool
as ye thinks;
Ye was stroäkin ma down wi' the 'air, as I be a-
stroäkin o' you,
But whiniver I looök'd i' the glass I wur sewer that
it couldn't be true;
Niver wur pretty, not I, but ye knaw'd it wur
pleasant to 'ear,

Thaw it warn't not me es wur pretty, but my two
'oonderd a-year.

VI.

D'ya mind the murnin' when we was a-walkin'
togither, an' stood
By the claäy'd-oop pond, that the foälk be as scared
at, i' Gigglesby wood,
Wheer the poor wench drowndid hersen, black Sal,
es 'd been disgraäced?
An' I feel'd thy arm es I stood wur a-creeäpin about
my waäist;
An' me es wur allus afear'd of a man's gittin' ower
fond,
I sidled awaäy an' awaäy till I plumpt foot fust i'
the pond;
And, Robby, I niver 'a liked tha sa well, as I did
that daäy,
Fur tha joompt in thysen, an' tha hoickt my feet wi'
a flop fro' the claäy.
Ay, stick oop thy back, an' set oop thy traäil, tha
may gie ma a kiss,
Fur I walk'd wi' tha all the way hoam an' wur
niver sa nigh saäyin' Yis.
But wa boäth was i' sich a clat we was shaämed to
cross Gigglesby Greeän,
Fur a cat may looök at a king thou knaws but the
cat mun be cleän.

So we boäth on us kep out o' sight o' the winders
o' Gigglesby Hinn—
Naäy, but the claws o' tha! quiet! they pricks cleän
thruf to the skin—
An' wa boäth slinkt 'oäm by the brokken shed i'
the laäne at the back,
Wheer the poodle runn'd at tha' once, an' thou
runn'd oop o' the thack;
An' tha squeedg'd my 'and i' the shed, fur theere
we was forced to 'ide,
Fur I seed that Steevie wur coomin', and one o' the
Tommies beside.

VII.

Theere now, what art'a mewin at, Steevie? for owt
I can tell—
Robby wur fust to be sewer, or I mowt 'a liked tha
as well.

VIII.

But, Robby, I thowt o' tha all the while I wur
chaängin' my gown,
An' I thowt shall I chaänge my staäte? but, O Lord,
upo' comin' down—
My bran-new carpet es fresh es a midder o' flowers
i' Maäy—
Why 'edn't tha wiped thy shoes? it wur clatted all
ower wi' claäy.
An' I could 'a cried ammost, fur I seed that it
couldn't be,

An' Robby I gied tha a raätin that sattled thy coortin o' me.
An' Molly an' me was agreed, as we was a-cleänin' the floor,
That a man be a durty thing an' a trouble an' plague wi' indoor.
But I rued it arter a bit, fur I stuck to tha more na the rest,
But I couldn't 'a lived wi' a man an' I knaws it be all fur the best.

XI.

Naäy—let ma stroäk tha down till I maäkes tha as smooth as silk,
But if I 'ed married tha, Robby, thou'd not 'a been worth thy milk,
Thou'd niver 'a cotch'd ony mice but 'a left me the work to do,
And 'a taäen to the bottle beside, so es all that I 'ears be true;
But I loovs tha to maäke thysen 'appy, an' soa purr awaäy, my dear,
Thou 'ed wellnigh purr'd ma awaäy fro' my oän two 'oonderd a-year.

X.

Sweärin agean, you Toms, as ye used to do twelve years sin'!

Ye niver 'eärd Steevie sweär 'cep' it wur at a dog
coomin' in.
An' boath o' ye mun be fools to be hallus a-shawin'
your claws,
Fur I niver cared nothink for neither—an' one o'
ye deäd ye knaws!
Coom giv hoäver then, weant ye? I warrant ye
soom fine daäy—
Theere, lig down—I shall hev to gie one or tother
awaäy.
Can't ye taäke pattern by Steevie? ye shant hev a
drop fro' the paäil.
Steevie be right good manners bang thruf to the
tip o' the taäil.

XI.

Robby, git down wi'tha, wilt tha? let Steevie coom
oop o' my knee.
Steevie, my lad, thou 'ed very nigh been the Steevie
fur me!
Robby wur fust to be sewer, 'e wur burn an' bred
i' the 'ouse,
But thou be es 'ansom a tabby as iver patted a
mouse.

XII.

An' I beänt not vaäin, but I knaws I 'ed led tha a
quieter life

Nor her wi' the hepitaph yonder! "A faäithful an' loovin' wife!"
An' 'cos o' thy farm by the beck, an' thy windmill oop o' the croft,
Tha thowt tha would marry ma, did tha? but that wur a bit ower soft,
Thaw thou was es soäber as daäy, wi' a niced red faäce, an' es cleän
Es a shillin' fresh fro' the mint wi' a bran-new 'eäd o' the Queeän,
An' thy farmin' es cleän es thysen, fur, Steevie, tha kep' it sa neät
That I niver not spied sa much as a poppy along wi' the wheät,
An' the wool of a thistle a-flyin' an' seeädin' tha haäted to see;
'Twur as bad as a battle-twig* 'ere i' my oän blue chaumber to me.
Ay, roob thy whiskers ageän ma, fur I could 'a taäen to tha well,
But fur thy bairns, poor Steevie, a bouncin' boy an' a gell.

XIII.

An' thou was es fond o' thy bairns es I be mysen o' my cats,

* Earwig.

But I niver not wish'd fur childer, I hevn't naw
likin' fur brats;
Pretty anew when ya dresses 'em oop, an' they goäs
fur a walk,
Or sits wi' their 'ands afoor 'em, an' doesn't not
'inder the talk!
But their bottles o' pap, an' their mucky bibs, an'
the clats an' the clouts,
An' their mashin' their toys to pieäces an' maäkin'
ma deäf wi' their shouts,
An' hallus a-joompin' about ma as if they was set
upo' springs,
An' a haxin' ma hawkard questions, an' saäyin'
ondecent things,
An' a-callin' ma "hugly" mayhap to my faäce, or a
teärin' my gown—
Dear! dear! dear! I mun part them Tommies—
Steevie git down.

XIV.

Ye be wuss nor the men-tommies, you. I tell'd ya,
na moor o' that!
Tom, lig theere o' the cushion, an' tother Tom 'ere
o' the mat.

XV.

Theere! I ha' master'd *them!* Hed I married the
Tommies—O Lord,

To loove an' obaäy the Tommies! I couldn't 'a
stuck by my word.
To be horder'd about, an' waäked, when Molly 'd
put out the light,
By a man coomin' in wi' a hiccup at ony hour o'
the night!
An' the taäble staäin'd wi' 'is aäle, an' the mud o'
'is boots o' the stairs,
An' the stink o' 'is pipe i' the 'ouse, an' the mark
o' 'is 'eäd o' the chairs!
An' noän o' my four sweet-arts 'ud 'a let me 'a hed
my oän waäy,
Sa I likes 'em best wi' taäils when they 'evn't a
word to saäy.

XVI.

An' I sits i' my oän little parlour, an' sarved by my
oän little lass,
Wi' my oän little garden outside, an' my oän bed o'
sparrow-grass,
An' my oän door-poorch wi' the woodbine an' jess-
mine a-dressin' it greeän,
An' my oän fine Jackman i' purple a roäbin' the
'ouse like a Queeän.

XVII.

An' the little gells bobs to ma hoffens es I be
abroad i' the laänes,

When I goäs to coomfut the poor es be down wi' their haäches an' their paäins:
An' a haäf-pot o' jam, or a mossel o' meät when it beänt too dear,
They maäkes ma a graäter Laädy nor 'er i' the mansion theer,
Hes 'es hallus to hax of a man how much to spare or to spend;
An' a spinster I be an' I will be, if soä pleäse God, to the hend.

XVIII.

Mew! mew!—Bess wi' the milk! what ha maäde our Molly sa laäte?
It should 'a been 'ere by seven, an' theere—it be strikin' height—
"Cushie wur craäzed fur 'er cauf" well—I 'eärd 'er a maäkin' 'er moän,
An' I thowt to mysen "thank God that I hevn't naw cauf o' my oän."
Theere!
Set it down!
Now Robby!
You Tommies shall waäit to-night
Till Robby an' Steevie 'es 'ed their lap—an' it sarves ye right.

BALIN AND BALAN.*

PELLAM the King, who held and lost with Lot
In that first war, and had his realm restored
But render'd tributary, fail'd of late
To send his tribute; wherefore Arthur call'd
His treasurer, one of many years, and spake,
"Go thou with him and him and bring it to us,
Lest we should set one truer on his throne.
Man's word is God in man."

His Baron said
"We go but harken: there be two strange knights
Who sit near Camelot at a fountain side,
A mile beneath the forest, challenging
And overthrowing every knight who comes.
Wilt thou I undertake them as we pass,
And send them to thee?"

Arthur laugh'd upon him.
"Old friend, too old to be so young, depart,
Delay not thou for ought, but let them sit,
Until they find a lustier than themselves."

* An introduction to "Merlin and Vivien."

So these departed. Early, one fair dawn,
The light-wing'd spirit of his youth return'd
On Arthur's heart; he arm'd himself and went,
So coming to the fountain-side beheld
Balin and Balan sitting statuelike,
Brethren, to right and left the spring, that down,
From underneath a plume of lady-fern,
Sang, and the sand danced at the bottom of it.
And on the right of Balin Balin's horse
Was fast beside an alder, on the left
Of Balan Balan's near a poplartree.
"Fair Sirs," said Arthur, "wherefore sit ye here?"
Balin and Balan answer'd "For the sake
Of glory; we be mightier men than all
In Arthur's court; that also have we proved;
For whatsoever knight against us came
Or I or he have easily overthrown."
"I too," said Arthur, "am of Arthur's hall,
But rather proven in his Paynim wars
Than famous jousts; but see, or proven or not,
Whether me likewise ye can overthrow."
And Arthur lightly smote the brethren down,
And lightly so return'd, and no man knew.
Then Balin rose, and Balan, and beside
The carolling water set themselves again,
And spake no word until the shadow turn'd;
When from the fringe of coppice round them burst

A spangled pursuivant, and crying "Sirs,
Rise, follow! ye be sent for by the King,"
They follow'd; whom when Arthur seeing ask'd
"Tell me your names; why sat ye by the well?"
Balin the stillness of a minute broke
Saying "An unmelodious name to thee,
Balin, 'the Savage'—that addition thine—
My brother and my better, this man here,
Balan. I smote upon the naked skull
A thrall of thine in open hall, my hand
Was gauntleted, half slew him; for I heard
He had spoken evil of me; thy just wrath
Sent me a three-years' exile from thine eyes.
I have not lived my life delightsomely:
For I that did that violence to thy thrall,
Had often wrought some fury on myself,
Saving for Balan: those three kingless years
Have past—were wormwood-bitter to me. King,
Methought that if we sat beside the well,
And hurl'd to ground what knight soever spurr'd
Against us, thou would'st take me gladlier back,
And make, as ten-times worthier to be thine
Than twenty Balins, Balan knight. I have said.
Not so—not all. A man of thine to-day
Abash'd us both, and brake my boast. Thy will?"
Said Arthur "Thou hast ever spoken truth;
Thy too fierce manhood would not let thee lie.

Rise, my true knight. As children learn, be thou
Wiser for falling! walk with me, and move
To music with thine Order and the King.
Thy chair, a grief to all the brethren, stands
Vacant, but thou retake it, mine again!"
    Thereafter, when Sir Balin enter'd hall,
The Lost one Found was greeted as in Heaven
With joy that blazed itself in woodland wealth
Of leaf, and gayest garlandage of flowers,
Along the walls and down the board; they sat,
And cup clash'd cup; they drank and some one sang,
Sweet-voiced, a song of welcome, whereupon
Their common shout in chorus, mounting, made
Those banners of twelve battles overhead
Stir, as they stirr'd of old, when Arthur's host
Proclaim'd him Victor, and the day was won.
    Then Balan added to their Order lived
A wealthier life than heretofore with these
And Balin, till their embassage return'd.
    "Sir King" they brought report "we hardly found,
So bush'd about it is with gloom, the hall
Of him to whom ye sent us, Pellam, once
A Christless foe of thine as ever dash'd
Horse against horse; but seeing that thy realm
Hath prosper'd in the name of Christ, the King
Took, as in rival heat, to holy things;
And finds himself descended from the Saint

Arimathæan Joseph; him who first
Brought the great faith to Britain over seas;
He boasts his life as purer than thine own;
Eats scarce enow to keep his pulse abeat;
Hath push'd aside his faithful wife, nor lets
Or dame or damsel enter at his gates
Lest he should be polluted. This gray King
Show'd us a shrine wherein were wonders—yea—
Rich arks with priceless bones of martyrdom,
Thorns of the crown and shivers of the cross,
And therewithal (for thus he told us) brought
By holy Joseph hither, that same spear
Wherewith the Roman pierced the side of Christ.
He much amazed us; after, when we sought
The tribute, answer'd "I have quite foregone
All matters of this world: Garlon, mine heir
Of him demand it," which this Garlon gave
With much ado, railing at thine and thee.

But when we left, in those deep woods we found
A knight of thine spear-stricken from behind,
Dead, whom we buried; more than one of us
Cried out on Garlon, but a woodman there
Reported of some demon in the woods
Was once a man, who driven by evil tongues
From all his fellows, lived alone, and came
To learn black magic, and to hate his kind
With such a hate, that when he died, his soul

Became a Fiend, which, as the man in life
Was wounded by blind tongues he saw not whence,
Strikes from behind. This woodman show'd the
cave
From which he sallies, and wherein he dwelt.
We saw the hoof-print of a horse, no more."
Then Arthur, "Let who goes before me, see
He do not fall behind me: foully slain
And villainously! who will hunt for me
This demon of the woods?" Said Balan, "I"!
So claim'd the quest and rode away, but first,
Embracing Balin, "Good, my brother, hear!
Let not thy moods prevail, when I am gone
Who used to lay them! hold them outer fiends,
Who leap at thee to tear thee; shake them aside,
Dreams ruling when wit sleeps! yea, but to dream
That any of these would wrong thee, wrongs thyself.
Witness their flowery welcome. Bound are they
To speak no evil. Truly save for fears,
My fears for thee, so rich a fellowship
Would make me wholly blest: thou one of them,
Be one indeed: consider them, and all
Their bearing in their common bond of love,
No more of hatred than in Heaven itself,
No more of jealousy than in Paradise."
So Balan warn'd, and went; Balin remain'd:
Who—for but three brief moons had glanced away

From being knighted till he smote the thrall,
And faded from the presence into years
Of exile—now would strictlier set himself
To learn what Arthur meant by courtesy,
Manhood, and knighthood; wherefore hover'd round
Lancelot, but when he mark'd his high sweet smile
In passing, and a transitory word
Make knight or churl or child or damsel seem
From being smiled at happier in themselves—
Sigh'd, as a boy lame-born beneath a height,
That glooms his valley, sighs to see the peak
Sun-flush'd, or touch at night the northern star;
For one from out his village lately climb'd
And brought report of azure lands and fair,
Far seen to left and right; and he himself
Hath hardly scaled with help a hundred feet
Up from the base: so Balin marvelling oft
How far beyond him Lancelot seem'd to move,
Groan'd, and at times would mutter, "These be gifts,
Born with the blood, not learnable, divine,
Beyond *my* reach. Well had I foughten—well—
In those fierce wars, struck hard—and had I crown'd
With my slain self the heaps of whom I slew—
So—better!—But this worship of the Queen,
That honour too wherein she holds him—this,
This was the sunshine that hath given the man
A growth, a name that branches o'er the rest,

And strength against all odds, and what the King
So prizes—overprizes—gentleness.
Her likewise would I worship an I might.
I never can be close with her, as he
That brought her hither. Shall I pray the King
To let me bear some token of his Queen
Whereon to gaze, remembering her—forget
My heats and violences? live afresh?
What, if the Queen disdain'd to grant it! nay
Being so stately-gentle, would she make
My darkness blackness? and with how sweet grace
She greeted my return! Bold will I be—
Some goodly cognizance of Guinevere,
In lieu of this rough beast upon my shield,
Langued gules, and tooth'd with grinning savagery."
And Arthur, when Sir Balin sought him, said
"What wilt thou bear?" Balin was bold, and ask'd
To bear her own crown-royal upon shield,
Whereat she smiled and turn'd her to the King,
Who answer'd "Thou shalt put the crown to use.
The crown is but the shadow of the King,
And this a shadow's shadow, let him have it,
So this will help him of his violences!"
"No shadow" said Sir Balin "O my Queen,
But light to me! no shadow, O my King
But golden earnest of a gentler life!"
So Balin bare the crown, and all the knights

Approved him, and the Queen, and all the world
Made music, and he felt his being move
In music with his Order, and the King.
The nightingale, full-toned in middle May,
Hath ever and anon a note so thin
It seems another voice in other groves;
Thus, after some quick burst of sudden wrath,
The music in him seem'd to change, and grow
Faint and far-off.
And once he saw the thrall
His passion half had gauntleted to death,
That causer of his banishment and shame,
Smile at him, as he deem'd, presumptuously;
His arm half rose to strike again, but fell:
The memory of that cognizance on shield
Weighted it down, but in himself he moan'd:
"Too high this mount of Camelot for me:
These high-set courtesies are not for me.
Shall I not rather prove the worse for these?
Fierier and stormier from restraining, break
Into some madness ev'n before the Queen?"
Thus, as a hearth lit in a mountain home,
And glancing on the window, when the gloom
Of twilight deepens round it, seems a flame
That rages in the woodland far below,
So when his moods were darken'd, court and King
And all the kindly warmth of Arthur's hall

Shadow'd an angry distance: yet he strove
To learn the graces of their Table, fought
Hard with himself, and seem'd at length in peace.
Then chanced, one morning, that Sir Balin sat
Close-bower'd in that garden nigh the hall.
A walk of roses ran from door to door;
A walk of lilies crost it to the bower:
And down that range of roses the great Queen
Came with slow steps, the morning on her face;
And all in shadow from the counter door
Sir Lancelot as to meet her, then at once,
As if he saw not, glanced aside, and paced
The long white walk of lilies toward the bower.
Follow'd the Queen; Sir Balin heard her "Prince,
Art thou so little loyal to thy Queen,
As pass without good morrow to thy Queen?"
To whom Sir Lancelot with his eyes on earth,
"Fain would I still be loyal to the Queen."
"Yea so" she said "but so to pass me by—
So loyal scarce is loyal to thyself,
Whom all men rate the king of courtesy.
Let be: ye stand, fair lord, as in a dream."
Then Lancelot with his hand among the flowers
"Yea—for a dream. Last night methought I saw
That maiden Saint who stands with lily in hand
In yonder shrine. All round her prest the dark,
And all the light upon her silver face

Flow'd from the spiritual lily that she held.
Lo! these her emblems drew mine eyes—away:
For see, how perfect-pure! As light a flush
As hardly tints the blossom of the quince
Would mar their charm of stainless maidenhood."
"Sweeter to me" she said "this garden rose
Deep-hued and many-folded! sweeter still
The wild-wood hyacinth and the bloom of May.
Prince, we have ridd'n before among the flowers
In those fair days—not all as cool as these,
Tho' season-earlier. Art thou sad? or sick?
Our noble King will send thee his own leech—
Sick? or for any matter anger'd at me?"
Then Lancelot lifted his large eyes; they dwelt
Deep-tranced on hers, and could not fall: her hue
Changed at his gaze: so turning side by side
They past, and Balin started from his bower.
"Queen? subject? but I see not what I see.
Damsel and lover? hear not what I hear.
My father hath begotten me in his wrath.
I suffer from the things before me, know,
Learn nothing; am not worthy to be knight;
A churl, a clown!" and in him gloom on gloom
Deepen'd: he sharply caught his lance and shield,
Nor stay'd to crave permission of the king,
But, mad for strange adventure, dash'd away.
He took the selfsame track as Balan, saw

The fountain where they sat together, sigh'd
"Was I not better there with him?" and rode
The skyless woods, but under open blue
Came on the hoarhead woodman at a bough
Wearily hewing. "Churl, thine axe!" he cried,
Descended, and disjointed it at a blow:
To whom the woodman utter'd wonderingly
"Lord, thou couldst lay the Devil of these woods
If arm of flesh could lay him." Balin cried
"Him, or the viler devil who plays his part,
To lay that devil would lay the Devil in me."
"Nay" said the churl, "our devil is a truth,
I saw the flash of him but yestereven.
And some *do* say that our Sir Garlon too
Hath learn'd black magic, and to ride unseen.
Look to the cave." But Balin answer'd him
"Old fabler, these be fancies of the churl,
Look to thy woodcraft," and so leaving him,
Now with slack rein and careless of himself,
Now with dug spur and raving at himself,
Now with droopt brow down the long glades he rode;
So mark'd not on his right a cavern-chasm
Yawn over darkness, where, nor far within
The whole day died, but, dying, gleam'd on rocks
Roof-pendent, sharp; and others from the floor,
Tusklike, arising, made that mouth of night

Whereout the Demon issued up from Hell.
He mark'd not this, but blind and deaf to all
Save that chain'd rage, which ever yelpt within,
Past eastward from the falling sun. At once
He felt the hollow-beaten mosses thud
And tremble, and then the shadow of a spear,
Shot from behind him, ran along the ground.
Sideways he started from the path, and saw,
With pointed lance as if to pierce, a shape,
A light of armour by him flash, and pass
And vanish in the woods; and follow'd this,
But all so blind in rage that unawares
He burst his lance against a forest bough,
Dishorsed himself, and rose again and fled
Far, till the castle of a King, the hall
Of Pellam, lichen-bearded, grayly draped
With streaming grass, appear'd, low-built but strong;
The ruinous donjon as a knoll of moss,
The battlement overtopt with ivytods,
A home of bats, in every tower an owl.
Then spake the men of Pellam crying "Lord,
Why wear ye this crown-royal upon shield?"
Said Balin "For the fairest and the best
Of ladies living gave me this to bear."
So stall'd his horse, and strode across the court,
But found the greetings both of knight and King

Faint in the low dark hall of banquet: leaves
Laid their green faces flat against the panes,
Sprays grated, and the canker'd boughs without
Whined in the wood; for all was hush'd within,
Till when at feast Sir Garlon likewise ask'd
"Why wear ye that crown-royal?" Balin said
"The Queen we worship, Lancelot, I, and all
As fairest, best and purest, granted me
To bear it!" Such a sound (for Arthur's knights
Were hated strangers in the hall) as makes
The white swan-mother, sitting, when she hears
A strange knee rustle thro' her secret reeds,
Made Garlon, hissing; then he sourly smiled.
"Fairest I grant her: I have seen; but best,
Best, purest? *thou* from Arthur's hall, and yet
So simple! hast thou eyes, or if, are these
So far besotted that they fail to see
This fair wife-worship cloaks a secret shame?
Truly, ye men of Arthur be but babes."
A goblet on the board by Balin, boss'd
With holy Joseph's legend, on his right
Stood, all of massiest bronze: one side had sea
And ship and sail and angels blowing on it;
And one was rough with wattling, and the walls
Of that low church he built at Glastonbury.
This Balin graspt, but while in act to hurl,
Thro' memory of that token on the shield

Relax'd his hold: "I will be gentle" he thought
"And passing gentle" caught his hand away,
Then fiercely to Sir Garlon "eyes have I
That saw to-day the shadow of a spear,
Shot from behind me, run along the ground;
Eyes too that long have watch'd how Lancelot
draws
From homage to the best and purest, might,
Name, manhood, and a grace, but scantly thine,
Who, sitting in thine own hall canst endure
To mouth so huge a foulness—to thy guest,
Me, me of Arthur's Table. Felon talk!
Let be! no more!"
But not the less by night
The scorn of Garlon, poisoning all his rest,
Stung him in dreams. At length, and dim thro'
leaves
Blinkt the white morn, sprays grated, and old
boughs
Whined in the wood. He rose, descended, met
The scorner in the castle court, and fain,
For hate and loathing, would have past him by;
But when Sir Garlon utter'd mocking-wise;
"What, wear ye still that same crown-scandalous?"
His countenance blacken'd, and his forehead veins
Bloated, and branch'd; and tearing out of sheath
The brand, Sir Balin with a fiery "Ha!

So thou be shadow, here I make thee ghost,"
Hard upon helm smote him, and the blade flew
Splintering in six, and clinkt upon the stones.
Then Garlon, reeling slowly backward, fell,
And Balin by the banneret of his helm
Dragg'd him, and struck, but from the castle a cry
Sounded across the court, and—men-at-arms,
A score with pointed lances, making at him—
He dash'd the pummel at the foremost face,
Beneath a low door dipt, and made his feet
Wings thro' a glimmering gallery, till he mark'd
The portal of King Pellam's chapel wide
And inward to the wall; he stept behind;
Thence in a moment heard them pass like wolves
Howling; but while he stared about the shrine,
In which he scarce could spy the Christ for Saints,
Beheld before a golden altar lie
The longest lance his eyes had ever seen,
Point-painted red; and seizing thereupon
Push'd thro' an open casement down, lean'd on it,
Leapt in a semicircle, and lit on earth;
Then hand at ear, and harkening from what side
The blindfold rummage buried in the walls
Might echo, ran the counter path, and found
His charger, mounted on him and away.
An arrow whizz'd to the right, one to the left,
One overhead; and Pellam's feeble cry

"Stay, stay him! he defileth heavenly things
With earthly uses"—made him quickly dive
Beneath the boughs, and race thro' many a mile
Of dense and open, till his goodly horse,
Arising wearily at a fallen oak,
Stumbled headlong, and cast him face to ground.
Half-wroth he had not ended, but all glad,
Knightlike, to find his charger yet unlamed,
Sir Balin drew the shield from off his neck,
Stared at the priceless cognizance, and thought
"I have shamed thee so that now thou shamest me,
Thee will I bear no more," high on a branch
Hung it, and turn'd aside into the woods,
And there in gloom cast himself all along,
Moaning "My violences, my violences!"
But now the wholesome music of the wood
Was dumb'd by one from out the hall of Mark,
A damsel-errant, warbling, as she rode
The woodland alleys, Vivien, with her Squire.
"The fire of Heaven has kill'd the barren cold,
And kindled all the plain and all the wold.
The new leaf ever pushes off the old.
The fire of Heaven is not the flame of Hell.
Old priest, who mumble worship in your quire—
Old monk and nun, ye scorn the world's desire,
Yet in your frosty cells ye feel the fire!
The fire of Heaven is not the flame of Hell.

The fire of Heaven is on the dusty ways.
The wayside blossoms open to the blaze.
The whole wood-world is one full peal of praise
The fire of Heaven is not the flame of Hell.
The fire of Heaven is lord of all things good,
And starve not thou this fire within thy blood,
But follow Vivien thro' the fiery flood!
The fire of Heaven is not the flame of Hell!"
Then turning to her Squire "This fire of Heaven,
This old sun-worship, boy, will rise again,
And beat the cross to earth, and break the King
And all his Table."
Then they reach'd a glade,
Where under one long lane of cloudless air
Before another wood, the royal crown
Sparkled, and swaying upon a restless elm
Drew the vague glance of Vivien, and her Squire;
Amazed were these; "Lo there" she cried—"a crown—
Borne by some high lord-prince of Arthur's hall,
And there a horse! the rider? where is he?
See, yonder lies one dead within the wood.
Not dead; he stirs!—but sleeping. I will speak.
Hail, royal knight, we break on thy sweet rest,
Not, doubtless, all unearn'd by noble deeds.
But bounden art thou, if from Arthur's hall,
To help the weak. Behold, I fly from shame,

A lustful King, who sought to win my love
Thro' evil ways: the knight, with whom I rode,
Hath suffer'd misadventure, and my squire
Hath in him small defence; but thou, Sir Prince,
Wilt surely guide me to the warrior King,
Arthur the blameless, pure as any maid,
To get me shelter for my maidenhood.
I charge thee by that crown upon thy shield,
And by the great Queen's name, arise and hence."
And Balin rose, "Thither no more! nor Prince
Nor knight am I, but one that hath defamed
The cognizance she gave me: here I dwell
Savage among the savage woods, here die—
Die: let the wolves' black maws ensepulchre
Their brother beast, whose anger was his lord.
O me, that such a name as Guinevere's,
Which our high Lancelot hath so lifted up,
And been thereby uplifted, should thro' me,
My violence, and my villainy, come to shame."
Thereat she suddenly laugh'd and shrill, anon
Sigh'd all as suddenly. Said Balin to her
"Is this thy courtesy—to mock me, ha?
Hence, for I will not with thee." Again she sigh'd
"Pardon, sweet lord! we maidens often laugh
When sick at heart, when rather we should weep.
I knew thee wrong'd. I brake upon thy rest,
And now full loth am I to break thy dream,

But thou art man, and canst abide a truth,
Tho' bitter. Hither, boy—and mark me well.
Dost thou remember at Caerleon once—
A year ago—nay, then I love thee not—
Ay, thou rememberest well—one summer dawn—
By the great tower—Caerleon upon Usk —
Nay, truly we were hidden: this fair lord,
The flower of all their vestal knighthood, knelt
In amorous homage—knelt—what else?—O ay
Knelt, and drew down from out his night-black hair
And mumbled that white hand whose ring'd caress
Had wander'd from her own King's golden head,
And lost itself in darkness, till she cried—
I thought the great tower would crash down on both—
'Rise, my sweet King, and kiss me on the lips,
Thou art my King.' This lad, whose lightest word
Is mere white truth in simple nakedness,
Saw them embrace: he reddens, cannot speak,
So bashful, he! but all the maiden Saints,
The deathless mother-maidenhood of Heaven
Cry out upon her. Up then, ride with me!
Talk not of shame! thou canst not, an thou would'st,
Do these more shame than these have done them-
selves."

She lied with ease; but horror-stricken he,
Remembering that dark bower at Camelot,
Breathed in a dismal whisper "It is truth."

Sunnily she smiled "And even in this lone wood
Sweet lord, ye do right well to whisper this.
Fools prate, and perish traitors. Woods have tongues,
As walls have ears: but thou shalt go with me,
And we will speak at first exceeding low.
Meet is it the good King be not deceived.
See now, I set thee high on vantage ground,
From whence to watch the time, and eagle-like
Stoop at thy will on Lancelot and the Queen."
She ceased; his evil spirit upon him leapt,
He ground his teeth together, sprang with a yell,
Tore from the branch, and cast on earth, the shield,
Drove his mail'd heel athwart the royal crown,
Stampt all into defacement, hurl'd it from him
Among the forest weeds, and cursed the tale,
The told-of, and the teller.
That weird yell,
Unearthlier than all shriek of bird or beast,
Thrill'd thro' the woods; and Balan lurking there
(His quest was unaccomplish'd) heard and thought
"The scream of that Wood-devil I came to quell!"
Then nearing "Lo! he hath slain some brother-knight,
And tramples on the goodly shield to show
His loathing of our Order and the Queen.
My quest, meseems, is here. Or devil or man

Guard thou thine head." Sir Balin spake not word,
But snatch'd a sudden buckler from the Squire,
And vaulted on his horse, and so they crash'd
In onset, and King Pellam's holy spear,
Reputed to be red with sinless blood,
Redden'd at once with sinful, for the point
Across the maiden shield of Balan prick'd
The hauberk to the flesh; and Balin's horse
Was wearied to the death, and, when they clash'd,
Rolling back upon Balin, crush'd the man
Inward, and either fell, and swoon'd away.
Then to her Squire mutter'd the damsel "Fools!
This fellow hath wrought some foulness with his Queen:
Else never had he borne her crown, nor raved
And thus foam'd over at a rival name:
But thou, Sir Chick, that scarce hast broken shell,
Art yet half-yolk, not even come to down—
Who never sawest Caerleon upon Usk—
And yet hast often pleaded for my love—
See what I see, be thou where I have been,
Or else Sir Chick — dismount and loose their casques
I fain would know what manner of men they be."
And when the Squire had loosed them, "Goodly!— look!
They might have cropt the myriad flower of May,

And butt each other here, like brainless bulls,
Dead for one heifer!"
Then the gentle Squire
"I hold them happy, so they died for love:
And, Vivien, tho' ye beat me like your dog,
I too could die, as now I live, for thee."
"Live on, Sir Boy," she cried. "I better prize
The living dog than the dead lion: away!
I cannot brook to gaze upon the dead."
Then leapt her palfrey o'er the fallen oak,
And bounding forward "Leave them to the wolves."
But when their foreheads felt the cooling air,
Balin first woke, and seeing that true face,
Familiar up from cradle-time, so wan,
Crawl'd slowly with low moans to where he lay,
And on his dying brother cast himself
Dying; and *he* lifted faint eyes; he felt
One near him; all at once they found the world,
Staring wild-wide; then with a childlike wail,
And drawing down the dim disastrous brow
That o'er him hung, he kiss'd it, moan'd and spake;
"O Balin, Balin, I that fain had died
To save thy life, have brought thee to thy death.
Why had ye not the shield I knew? and why
Trampled ye thus on that which bare the Crown?"

Then Balin told him brokenly, and in gasps,
All that had chanced, and Balan moan'd again.
"Brother, I dwelt a day in Pellam's hall:
This Garlon mock'd me, but I heeded not.
And one said 'Eat in peace! a liar is he,
And hates thee for the tribute!' this good knight
Told me, that twice a wanton damsel came,
And sought for Garlon at the castle-gates,
Whom Pellam drove away with holy heat.
I well believe this damsel, and the one
Who stood beside thee even now, the same.
'She dwells among the woods' he said 'and meets
And dallies with him in the Mouth of Hell."
Foul are their lives; foul are their lips; they lied.
Pure as our own true Mother is our Queen."
"O brother" answer'd Balin "Woe is me!
My madness all thy life has been thy doom,
Thy curse, and darken'd all thy day; and now
The night has come. I scarce can see thee now.
Goodnight! for we shall never bid again
Goodmorrow—Dark my doom was here, and dark
It will be there. I see thee now no more.
I would not mine again should darken thine,
Goodnight, true brother."
Balan answer'd low
"Goodnight, true brother here! goodmorrow there!

We two were born together, and we die
Together by one doom:" and while he spoke
Closed his death-drowsing eyes, and slept the
sleep
With Balin, either lock'd in either's arm.

PROLOGUE

TO GENERAL HAMLEY.

Our birches yellowing and from each
The light leaf falling fast,
While squirrels from our fiery beech
Were bearing off the mast,
You came, and look'd and loved the view
Long-known and loved by me,
Green Sussex fading into blue
With one gray glimpse of sea;
And, gazing from this height alone,
We spoke of what had been
Most marvellous in the wars your own
Crimean eyes had seen;
And now—like old-world inns that take
Some warrior for a sign
That therewithin a guest may make
True cheer with honest wine—
Because you heard the lines I read
Nor utter'd word of blame,

I dare without your leave to head
These rhymings with your name,
Who know you but as one of those
I fain would meet again,
Yet know you, as your England knows
That you and all your men
Were soldiers to her heart's desire,
When, in the vanish'd year,
You saw the league-long rampart-fire
Flare from Tel-el-Kebir
Thro' darkness, and the foe was driven,
And Wolseley overthrew
Aräbi, and the stars in heaven
Paled, and the glory grew.

THE CHARGE OF THE HEAVY BRIGADE AT BALACLAVA.

OCTOBER 25, 1854.

I.

THE charge of the gallant three hundred, the Heavy Brigade!
Down the hill, down the hill, thousands of Russians,
Thousands of horsemen, drew to the valley—and stay'd;
For Scarlett and Scarlett's three hundred were riding by
When the points of the Russian lances arose in the sky;
And he call'd "Left wheel into line!" and they wheel'd and obey'd.
Then he look'd at the host that had halted he knew not why,
And he turn'd half round, and he bad his trumpeter sound
To the charge, and he rode on ahead, as he waved his blade
To the gallant three hundred whose glory will never die—

"Follow," and up the hill, up the hill, up the hill,
Follow'd the Heavy Brigade.

II.

The trumpet, the gallop, the charge, and the might
of the fight!
Thousands of horsemen had gather'd there on the
height,
With a wing push'd out to the left, and a wing to
the right,
And who shall escape if they close? but he dash'd
up alone
Thro' the great gray slope of men,
Sway'd his sabre, and held his own
Like an Englishman there and then;
All in a moment follow'd with force
Three that were next in their fiery course,
Wedged themselves in between horse and horse,
Fought for their lives in the narrow gap they had
made—
Four amid thousands! and up the hill, up the hill,
Gallopt the gallant three hundred, the Heavy
Brigade.

III.

Fell like a cannonshot,
Burst like a thunderbolt,
Crash'd like a hurricane,

Broke thro' the mass from below,
Drove thro' the midst of the foe,
Plunged up and down, to and fro,
Rode flashing blow upon blow,
Brave Inniskillens and Greys
Whirling their sabres in circles of light!
And some of us, all in amaze,
Who were held for a while from the fight,
And were only standing at gaze,
When the dark-muffled Russian crowd
Folded its wings from the left and the right,
And roll'd them around like a cloud,—
O mad for the charge and the battle were we,
When our own good redcoats sank from sight,
Like drops of blood in a dark-gray sea,
And we turn'd to each other, whispering, all dismay'd,
"Lost are the gallant three hundred of Scarlett's Brigade!"

IV.

"Lost one and all" were the words
Mutter'd in our dismay;
But they rode like Victors and Lords
Thro' the forest of lances and swords
In the heart of the Russian hordes,
They rode, or they stood at bay—

Struck with the sword-hand and slew,
Down with the bridle-hand drew
The foe from the saddle and threw
Underfoot there in the fray—
Ranged like a storm or stood like a rock
In the wave of a stormy day;
Till suddenly shock upon shock
Stagger'd the mass from without,
Drove it in wild disarray,
For our men gallopt up with a cheer and a shout,
And the foeman surged, and waver'd, and reel'd
Up the hill, up the hill, up the hill, out of the field,
And over the brow and away.

V.

Glory to each and to all, and the charge that they made!
Glory to all the three hundred, and all the Brigade!

NOTE.—The "three hundred" of the "Heavy Brigade" who made this famous charge were the Scots Greys and the 2nd squadron of Inniskillings; the remainder of the "Heavy Brigade" subsequently dashing up to their support.

The "three" were Scarlett's aide-de-camp, Elliot, and the trumpeter and Shegog the orderly, who had been close behind him.

EPILOGUE.

IRENE.

NOT this way will you set your name
A star among the stars.

POET.

What way?

IRENE.

You praise when you should blame
The barbarism of wars.
A juster epoch has begun.

POET.

Yet tho' this cheek be gray,
And that bright hair the modern sun,
Those eyes the blue to-day,
You wrong me, passionate little friend.
I would that wars should cease,
I would the globe from end to end
Might sow and reap in peace,
And some new Spirit o'erbear the old,
Or Trade re-frain the Powers

From war with kindly links of gold.
Or Love with wreaths of flowers.
Slav, Teuton, Kelt, I count them all
My friends and brother souls,
With all the peoples, great and small,
That wheel between the poles.
But since, our mortal shadow, Ill
To waste this earth began—
Perchance from some abuse of Will
In words before the man
Involving ours—he needs must fight
To make true peace his own,
He needs must combat might with might,
Or Might would rule alone;
And who loves War for War's own sake
Is fool, or crazed, or worse;
But let the patriot-soldier take
His meed of fame in verse;
Nay—tho' that realm were in the wrong
For which her warriors bleed,
It still were right to crown with song
The warrior's noble deed—
A crown the Singer hopes may last,
For so the deed endures;
But Song will vanish in the Vast;
And that large phrase of yours
"A Star among the stars," my dear,

Is girlish talk at best;
For dare we dally with the sphere
As he did half in jest,
Old Horace? "I will strike" said he
"The stars with head sublime,"
But scarce could see, as now we see,
The man in Space and Time,
So drew perchance a happier lot
Than ours, who rhyme to-day.
The fires that arch this dusky dot—
Yon myriad-worlded way—
The vast sun-clusters' gather'd blaze,
World-isles in lonely skies,
Whole heavens within themselves, amaze
Our brief humanities;
And so does Earth; for Homer's fame,
Tho' carved in harder stone—
The falling drop will make his name
As mortal as my own.

IRENE.

No!

POET.

Let it live then—ay, till when?
Earth passes, all is lost
In what they prophesy, our wise men,

Sun-flame or sunless frost,
And deed and song alike are swept
Away, and all in vain
As far as man can see, except
The man himself remain;
And tho', in this lean age forlorn,
Too many a voice may cry
That man can have no after-morn,
Not yet of these am I.
The man remains, and whatsoe'er
He wrought of good or brave
Will mould him thro' the cycle-year
That dawns behind the grave.

And here the Singer for his Art
Not all in vain may plead
"The song that nerves a nation's heart,
Is in itself a deed."

TO VIRGIL.

WRITTEN AT THE REQUEST OF THE MANTUANS FOR THE NINETEENTH CENTENARY OF VIRGIL'S DEATH.

I.

ROMAN VIRGIL, thou that singest
Ilion's lofty temples robed in fire,
Ilion falling, Rome arising,
wars, and filial faith, and Dido's pyre;

II.

Landscape-lover, lord of language
more than he that sang the Works and Days,
All the chosen coin of fancy
flashing out from many a golden phrase;

III.

Thou that singest wheat and woodland,
tilth and vineyard, hive and horse and herd;
All the charm of all the Muses
often flowering in a lonely word;

IV.

Poet of the happy Tityrus
piping underneath his beechen bowers;
Poet of the poet-satyr
whom the laughing shepherd bound with flowers;

V.

Chanter of the Pollio, glorying
in the blissful years again to be,
Summers of the snakeless meadow,
unlaborious earth and oarless sea;

VI.

Thou that seëst Universal
Nature moved by Universal Mind;
Thou majestic in thy sadness
at the doubtful doom of human kind;

VII.

Light among the vanish'd ages;
star that gildest yet this phantom shore;
Golden branch amid the shadows,
kings and realms that pass to rise no more;

VIII.

Now thy Forum roars no longer,
fallen every purple Cæsar's dome—

Tho' thine ocean-roll of rhythm
sound for ever of Imperial Rome—

IX.

Now the Rome of slaves hath perish'd,
and the Rome of freemen holds her place,
I, from out the Northern Island
sunder'd once from all the human race,

X.

I salute thee, Mantovano,
I that loved thee since my day began,
Wielder of the stateliest measure
ever moulded by the lips of man.

THE DEAD PROPHET.

182—.

I.

DEAD!

And the Muses cried with a stormy cry
"Send them no more, for evermore.
Let the people die."

II.

Dead!
"Is it *he* then brought so low?"
And a careless people flock'd from the fields
With a purse to pay for the show.

III.

Dead, who had served his time,
Was one of the people's kings,
Had labour'd in lifting them out of slime,
And showing them, souls have wings!

IV.

Dumb on the winter heath he lay.
His friends had stript him bare,

And roll'd his nakedness everyway
That all the crowd might stare.

V.

A storm-worn signpost not to be read,
And a tree with a moulder'd nest
On its barkless bones, stood stark by the dead;
And behind him, low in the West,

VI.

With shifting ladders of shadow and light,
And blurr'd in colour and form,
The sun hung over the gates of Night,
And glared at a coming storm.

VII.

Then glided a vulturous Beldam forth,
That on dumb death had thriven;
They call'd her "Reverence" here upon earth,
And "The Curse of the Prophet" in Heaven.

VIII.

She knelt—"We worship him"—all but wept—
"So great so noble was he!"
She clear'd her sight, she arose, she swept
The dust of earth from her knee.

IX.

"Great! for he spoke and the people heard,
And his eloquence caught like a flame

From zone to zone of the world, till his Word
Had won him a noble name.

X.

Noble! he sung, and the sweet sound ran
Thro' palace and cottage door,
For he touch'd on the whole sad planet of man,
The kings and the rich and the poor;

XI.

And he sung not alone of an old sun set,
But a sun coming up in his youth!
Great and noble—O yes—but yet—
For man is a lover of Truth,

XII.

And bound to follow, wherever she go
Stark-naked, and up or down,
Thro' her high hill-passes of stainless snow,
Or the foulest sewer of the town—

XIII.

Noble and great—O ay—but then,
Tho' a prophet should have his due,
Was he noblier-fashion'd than other men?
Shall we see to it, I and you?

XIV.

For since he would sit on a Prophet's seat,
As a lord of the Human soul,

We needs must scan him from head to feet
Were it but for a wart or a mole?"

XV.

His wife and his child stood by him in tears,
But she—she push'd them aside.
"Tho' a name may last for a thousand years,
Yet a truth is a truth," she cried.

XVI.

And she that had haunted his pathway still,
Had often truckled and cower'd
When he rose in his wrath, and had yielded her will
To the master, as overpower'd,

XVII.

She tumbled his helpless corpse about.
"Small blemish upon the skin!
But I think we know what is fair without
Is often as foul within."

XVIII.

She crouch'd, she tore him part from part,
And out of his body she drew
The red "Blood-eagle" * of liver and heart;
She held them up to the view;

* Old Viking term for lungs, liver, etc., when torn by the conqueror out of the body of the conquered.

XIX.

She gabbled, as she groped in the dead,
And all the people were pleased;
"See, what a little heart," she said,
"And the liver is half-diseased!"

XX.

She tore the Prophet after death,
And the people paid her well.
Lightnings flicker'd along the heath;
One shriek'd "The fires of Hell!"

EARLY SPRING.

I.

ONCE more the Heavenly Power
Makes all things new,
And domes the red-plow'd hills
With loving blue;
The blackbirds have their wills,
The throstles too.

II.

Opens a door in Heaven;
From skies of glass
A Jacob's ladder falls
On greening grass,
And o'er the mountain-walls
Young angels pass.

III.

Before them fleets the shower,
And burst the buds,
And shine the level lands,
And flash the floods;

The stars are from their hands
Flung thro' the woods,

IV.

The woods with living airs
How softly fann'd,
Light airs from where the deep,
All down the sand,
Is breathing in his sleep,
Heard by the land.

V.

O follow, leaping blood,
The season's lure!
O heart, look down and up
Serene, secure,
Warm as the crocus cup,
Like snowdrops, pure!

VI.

Past, Future glimpse and fade
Thro' some slight spell,
A gleam from yonder vale,
Some far blue fell,
And sympathies, how frail,
In sound and smell!

VII.

Till at thy chuckled note,
Thou twinkling bird,

The fairy fancies range,
And, lightly stirr'd,
Ring little bells of change
From word to word.

VIII.

For now the Heavenly Power
Makes all things new,
And thaws the cold, and fills
The flower with dew;
The blackbirds have their wills,
The poets too.

PREFATORY POEM TO MY BROTHER'S SONNETS.

Midnight, June 30, 1879.

I.

MIDNIGHT—in no midsummer tune
The breakers lash the shores;
The cuckoo of a joyless June
Is calling out of doors:

And thou hast vanish'd from thine own
To that which looks like rest,
True brother, only to be known
By those who love thee best.

II.

Midnight—and joyless June gone by,
And from the deluged park
The cuckoo of a worse July
Is calling thro' the dark:

But thou art silent underground,
And o'er thee streams the rain,

True poet, surely to be found
When Truth is found again.

III.

And, now to these unsummer'd skies
The summer bird is still,
Far off a phantom cuckoo cries
From out a phantom hill;

And thro' this midnight breaks the sun
Of sixty years away,
The light of days when life begun,
The days that seem to-day,

When all my griefs were shared with thee,
As all my hopes were thine—
As all thou wert was one with me,
May all thou art be mine!

"FRATER AVE ATQUE VALE."

Row us out from Desenzano, to your Sirmione row!
So they row'd, and there we landed—"O venusta Sirmio!"
There to me thro' all the groves of olive in the summer glow,
There beneath the Roman ruin where the purple flowers grow,
Came that "Ave atque Vale" of the Poet's hopeless woe,
Tenderest of Roman poets nineteen-hundred years ago,
"Frater Ave atque Vale"—as we wander'd to and fro
Gazing at the Lydian laughter of the Garda Lake below
Sweet Catullus's all-but-island, olive-silvery Sirmio!

HELEN'S TOWER.*

HELEN'S TOWER, here I stand,
Dominant over sea and land.
Son's love built me, and I hold
Mother's love engrav'n in gold.
Love is in and out of time,
I am mortal stone and lime.
Would my granite girth were strong
As either love, to last as long!
I should wear my crown entire
To and thro' the Doomsday fire,
And be found of angel eyes
In earth's recurring Paradise.

* Written at the request of my friend, Lord Dufferin.

EPITAPH ON LORD STRATFORD DE REDCLIFFE.

IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY.

THOU third great Canning, stand among our best
And noblest, now thy long day's work hath ceased,
Here silent in our Minster of the West
Who wert the voice of England in the East.

EPITAPH ON GENERAL GORDON.

For a Cenotaph.

Warrior of God, man's friend, not laid below,
But somewhere dead far in the waste Soudan,
Thou livest in all hearts, for all men know
This earth has borne no simpler, nobler man.

EPITAPH ON CAXTON.

In St. Margaret's, Westminster.

Fiat Lux (his motto).

Thy prayer was "Light—more Light—while Time
shall last!"
Thou sawest a glory growing on the night,
But not the shadows which that light would cast,
Till shadows vanish in the Light of Light.

TO THE DUKE OF ARGYLL.

O Patriot Statesman, be thou wise to know
The limits of resistance, and the bounds
Determining concession; still be bold
Not only to slight praise but suffer scorn;
And be thy heart a fortress to maintain
The day against the moment, and the year
Against the day; thy voice, a music heard
Thro' all the yells and counter-yells of feud
And faction, and thy will, a power to make
This ever-changing world of circumstance,
In changing, chime with never-changing Law.

HANDS ALL ROUND.

First pledge our Queen this solemn night,
Then drink to England, every guest;
That man's the true Cosmopolite
Who loves his native country best.
May freedom's oak for ever live
With stronger life from day to day;
That man's the true Conservative
Who lops the moulder'd branch away.
Hands all round!
God the traitor's hope confound!
To this great cause of Freedom drink, my friends,
And the great name of England, round and round.

To all the loyal hearts who long
To keep our English Empire whole!
To all our noble sons, the strong
New England of the Southern Pole!
To England under Indian skies,
To those dark millions of her realm!

To Canada whom we love and prize,
Whatever statesman hold the helm.
Hands all round!
God the traitor's hope confound!
To this great name of England drink, my friends,
And all her glorious empire, round and round.

To all our statesmen so they be
True leaders of the land's desire!
To both our Houses, may they see
Beyond the borough and the shire!
We sail'd wherever ship could sail,
We founded many a mighty state;
Pray God our greatness may not fail
Through craven fears of being great.
Hands all round!
God the traitor's hope confound!
To this great cause of Freedom drink, my friends,
And the great name of England, round and round.

FREEDOM.

I.

O THOU so fair in summers gone,
While yet thy fresh and virgin soul
Inform'd the pillar'd Parthenon,
The glittering Capitol;

II.

So fair in southern sunshine bathed,
But scarce of such majestic mien
As here with forehead vapour-swathed
In meadows ever green;

III.

For thou—when Athens reign'd and Rome,
Thy glorious eyes were dimm'd with pain
To mark in many a freeman's home
The slave, the scourge, the chain;

IV.

O follower of the Vision, still
In motion to the distant gleam,

Howe'er blind force and brainless will
May jar thy golden dream

V.

Of Knowledge fusing class with class,
Of civic Hate no more to be,
Of Love to leaven all the mass,
Till every Soul be free;

VI.

Who yet, like Nature, wouldst not mar
By changes all too fierce and fast
This order of Her Human Star,
This heritage of the past;

VII.

O scorner of the party cry
That wanders from the public good,
Thou—when the nations rear on high
Their idol smear'd with blood,

VIII.

And when they roll their idol down—
Of saner worship sanely proud;
Thou loather of the lawless crown
As of the lawless crowd;

IX.

How long thine ever-growing mind
Hath still'd the blast and strown the wave,

Tho' some of late would raise a wind
To sing thee to thy grave,

X.

Men loud against all forms of power—
Unfurnish'd brows, tempestuous tongues—
Expecting all things in an hour—
Brass mouths and iron lungs!

TO H.R.H. PRINCESS BEATRICE.

Two Suns of Love make day of human life,
Which else with all its pains, and griefs, and deaths,
Were utter darkness—one, the Sun of dawn
That brightens thro' the Mother's tender eyes,
And warms the child's awakening world—and one
The later-rising Sun of spousal Love,
Which from her household orbit draws the child
To move in other spheres. The Mother weeps
At that white funeral of the single life,
Her maiden daughter's marriage; and her tears
Are half of pleasure, half of pain—the child
Is happy—ev'n in leaving *her!* but Thou,
True daughter, whose all-faithful, filial eyes
Have seen the loneliness of earthly thrones,
Wilt neither quit the widow'd Crown, nor let
This later light of Love have risen in vain,
But moving thro' the Mother's home, between
The two that love thee, lead a summer life,

Sway'd by each Love, and swaying to each Love,
Like some conjectured planet in mid heaven
Between two Suns, and drawing down from both
The light and genial warmth of double day.

POETS AND THEIR BIBLIOGRAPHIES.

Old poets foster'd under friendlier skies,
  Old Virgil who would write ten lines, they say,
  At dawn, and lavish all the golden day
To make them wealthier in his readers' eyes;
And you, old popular Horace, you the wise
  Adviser of the nine-years-ponder'd lay,
  And you, that wear a wreath of sweeter bay,
Catullus, whose dead songster never dies;
If, glancing downward on the kindly sphere
  That once had roll'd you round and round the Sun,
  You see your Art still shrined in human shelves,
You should be jubilant that you flourish'd here
  Before the Love of Letters, overdone,
Had swampt the sacred poets with themselves.

THE END.

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